BOTTLE BABY—This Gorgeous Man Trap Came Under Glass

fantastic

ANC

SCIENCE-FICTION

15¢ APRIL 35¢

Beginning—

THE VENGEANCE OF KYVOR

Great New Two-Part Serial

GREAT SCIENCE FICTION

FANTASTIC

APRIL 1957 VOL. 6 NO. 3

How Would You Use
UNLIMITED POWER?

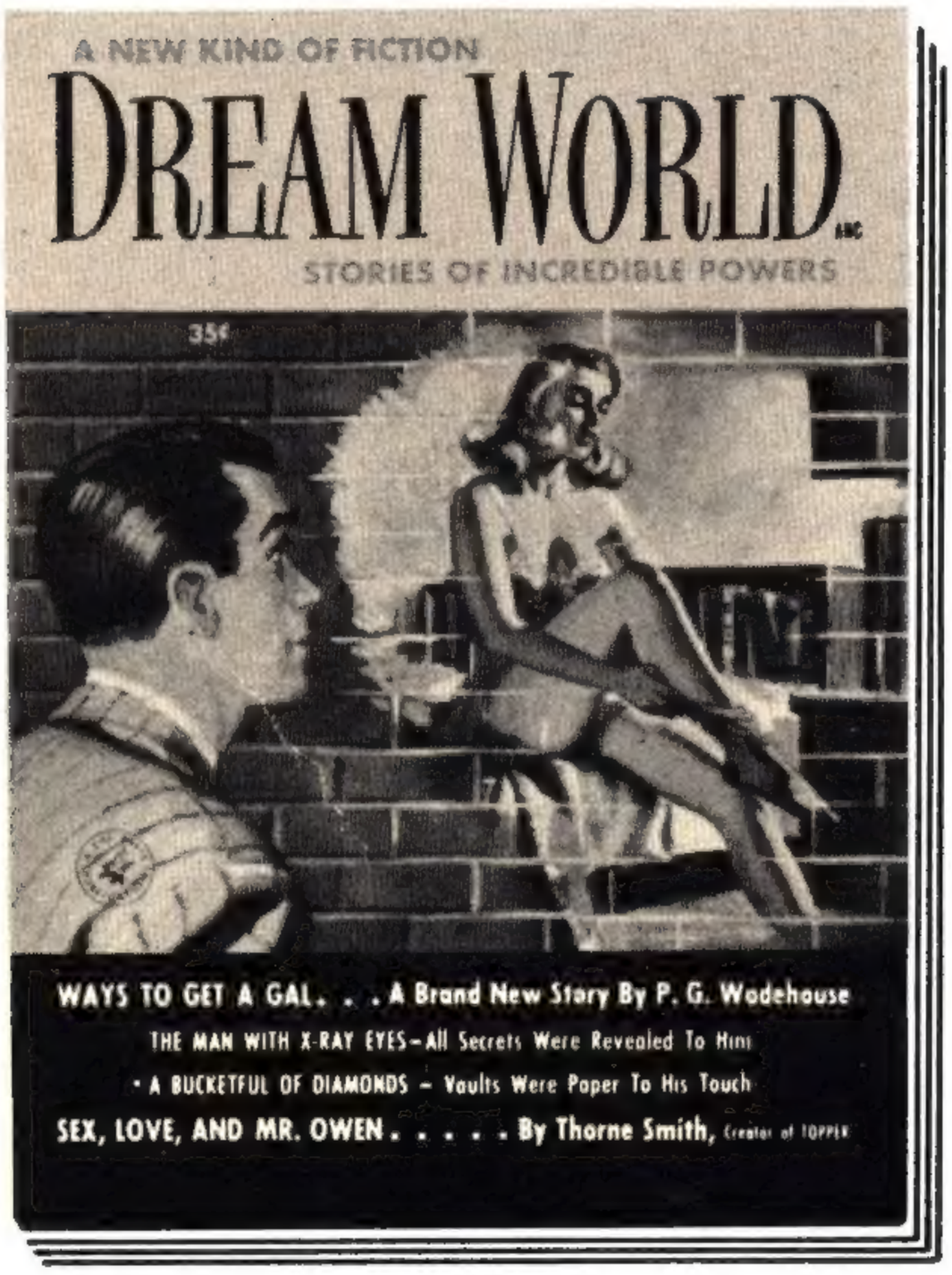
If, at will, you could *be* anyone—
do anything in the world . . .

. . . would you choose to be President?

. . . would you draw a million dollars out of the nearest bank?

. . . would you choose a glamorous movie star as your wife?

. . . would you use your power for good or evil?


A NEW KIND OF FICTION
DREAM WORLD
STORIES OF INCREDIBLE POWERS
35¢
WAYS TO GET A GAL. . . . A Brand New Story By P. G. Wodehouse
THE MAN WITH X-RAY EYES—All Secrets Were Revealed To Him
• A BUCKETFUL OF DIAMONDS — Vaults Were Paper To His Touch
SEX, LOVE, AND MR. OWEN . . . . . By Thorne Smith, Creator of TOPPER

If the idea intrigues you, you're sure to enjoy DREAM WORLD, an entirely new type of Science Fantasy! In DREAM WORLD, you'll share the adventures of ordinary men and women who are suddenly granted extraordinary powers.

Watch for DREAM WORLD!

Now on Sale at Your Favorite Newsstand

FANTASTIC, Vol. 6, No. 3, April 1957, is published monthly by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, William B. Ziff, Chairman of the Board (1946-1953), at 64 E. Lake St., Chicago 1, Illinois. Entered as second-class matter at Post Office at Chicago, Ill. Subscription rates: U. S. and possessions and Canada $4.00 for 12 issues; Pan American Union Countries $4.50; all other foreign countries $5.00.

BY THE EDITOR

IN WHICH THE CUSTOMERS DO THE WORK

Dear Mr. Fairman:

I have just opened my February *Fantastic,* and the thought of you being worried about so many things has spoiled the evening for me *(February editorials: "Things we've always wondered about").* I have dashed down a few answers which I hope will settle your mind.

Why do policemen wear their guns way back on their hips where any thug can sneak up and grab them?

This is a product of the times, and is actually the safest place possible. So many police now ride in patrol cars or on motorcycles that it is fashionable to sit on the weapon. No one can even see it. However, the solution recently more or less backfired when a young patrolman in arising shot himself in the precinct car.

Why do people sitting alone at bars always wear such grim expressions?

Think. No one can buy you a drink if you are alone. There is not even the pleasure of buying someone else a shot. There is no adventure, no unpredictability to life; everything is pegged to the cost of the drink and your rate of consumption. If you are wealthy, a sodden future looms; if you are broke, a horrible sobriety threatens.

How can women possibly walk in shoes with four-inch heels?

The key to the answer is in the verb "walk." My Webster's gives these thought-provoking definitions: "To go restlessly about contrary to the normal course of nature. . . . To move in a manner likened to walking, as a chimney swaying through

(Continued on page 119)

fantastic

APRIL 1957

Volume 6 Number 3

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
William B. Ziff (1898-1953) Founder
Editorial and Executive Offices
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, New York

President
B. G. DAVIS

Vice Presidents —
H. J. MORGANROTH
MICHAEL H. FROELICH
MICHAEL MICHAELSON

Secretary-Treasurer
G. E. CARNEY

Art Director
ALBERT GRUEN

FICTION

THE VENGEANCE OF KYVOR
By Randall Garrett..... 6

A NIGHT IN BENNY'S BAR
By Wilmon Menard..... 36

ABE LINCOLN—ANDROID
By O. H. Leslie..... 46

BOTTLE BABY
By Henry Slesar..... 66

GRAYGORTCH
By Don Wilcox..... 99

THE UNEMPLOYED
By Doris Greenberg..... 121

FEATURES

LOW MAN ON THE ASTEROID
By The Editor..... 3

SUPERLATIVES 117

ACCORDING TO YOU . . .
By The Readers..... 124

IT SOUNDS FANTASTIC, BUT . . .
By Paul Steiner..... 129

✠

Cover: EDWARD VALIGURSKY

Editor
PAUL W. FAIRMAN

Managing Editor
CELE GOLDSMITH

Art Editor
HERBERT ROGOFF

© 1957 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

1957 PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTORY

& BUYING GUIDE

Most Complete Handbook of Photographic products

ILLUSTRATED LISTINGS

LATEST MODELS

LATEST PRICES

Cameras . . Lenses . . Flashes & Speedlights . . .
Movie Equipment . . Enlargers . . . Projectors . . .
Exposure Meters . . Lighting Equipment . . . .
Films & Papers . . . Stereo Equipment . . . Filters . . .
Tape Recorders . etc . etc . . . .

Compiled by the editors of POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY

Beast and man were locked together

THE VENGEANCE OF KYVOR

in a struggle of primordial fury.

FIRST OF TWO PARTS

THE VENGEANCE OF KYVOR

By RANDALL GARRETT

In the great rain forests of Venus lived a golden god of a man in whose heart smouldered a demand for cosmic vengeance. Kyvor the Magnificent—a towering bulwark against tyranny. But the despots he humiliated knew he could be slain.

CHAPTER I

THE eternal clouds of Venus floated over the vast, murky jungle like a great blanket of gray wool, unbroken save for glimmers of pearly light filtering through from the hot sun above the endless layer of fog. Beneath, in the dense jungle itself, could be heard the whisperings of the warm breeze and the myriad voices of the life that fed and hunted in the hidden places of the great rain forest.

Polthan the Hunter crept silently along the branch of a huge Empire tree, his bare feet noiseless on the rough bark. A single misstep could plunge him helplessly into the dimness beneath, to fall a hundred feet to the ground below. Were he to do so, not even the thick moss that covered the jungle floor would save his life.

But the thought of falling never entered the mind of Polthan the Hunter. All his life had been spent in these jungles, seeking his livelihood in the leafy foliage of the vast upper reaches of the great trees. To him, the dangers that lurked on every side were as commonplace as the dangers of crossing a busy city street are to an Earthman.

Polthan's keen nostrils had detected the scent of a *glith*, a heavy, sluggish plant-eater that foraged through the heights of the jungle for the succulent leaves of the small plants that grew in the rough

bark of the towering Empire trees.

Polthan's mottled blue-green skin was perfect for camouflage. Like any native Venusian, he could, by moving silently and carefully, blend so well with the foliage of the great trees that he could become completely invisible at a distance of only a few feet.

In the distance, he heard the harsh roar of a sslis reptile searching for his prey. Polthan's wide, frog-like mouth smiled gently. The sslis was on the scent of the glith, too—but Polthan would reach the plant-eater first.

Then Polthan's keen ears caught another sound. It was a faint, whistling scream that became louder with every passing second. Polthan recognized the sound. It was the whine of a spaceship! It was one of the sky vessels of the despised Earthmen!

The whine became a roar as the sky ship dropped lower.

The normal jungle sounds ceased as the animals of the forest heard the terrifying sound. Polthan knew it would be of no use to try to find the glith now; it was moving rapidly away, alarmed by the scream in the air. Polthan shrugged and slung his blow-gun over his shoulder. He might as well see what the Earth ship was up to.

Flexing the muscles of his legs, he leaped toward the branch above him and grasped the thick bark with the sharp, strong claws of his fingers. Thus he climbed lithely upward, from branch to branch, until he reached the top of the huge tree, hundreds of feet above the forest floor.

There, perched precariously on a swaying limb, he watched the spaceship descending rapidly through the gray Venusian sky.

Polthan knew very little of spaceships, but it was obvious, even to him, that this one was in trouble. It dropped in jerks and swayed wildly from side to side as it tried to lower itself to the solidity of the ground below.

Finally, it touched the treetops. There was a rending crash, a roar of the ship's atomic motors—then silence.

Polthan the Hunter watched for a moment, but nothing further occurred. Satisfied, he swung down from his perch and headed back toward his village. Kyvor must hear of this.

Lanina Harrison opened her eyes. For several mo-

ments, she could not recall where she was. Around her, all was dark, with the Stygian blackness of a tomb. She tried to move, and a sudden, searing pain shot up her left arm, burning along her nerves like fire, wrenching a scream from her throat. The pain brought her to full consciousness.

The spaceship had crashed! And she had survived! Then the horrifying thought struck her that perhaps she was the lone survivor.

But she did not panic. Since she was sixteen, Lanina had been carefully trained by the Earth Space Service to handle herself in every emergency. From the blistering heat of Sunside Mercury to the freezing cold of Saturn's moons, Lanina Harrison had proved herself a dozen times over. Her courage had never faltered.

Nor would it falter now. Not even the dangers of the hidden surface of forbidden Venus could deter her from her purpose. Even the hideously bad luck of underestimating the armaments of the Venusian Emperor, and the resulting crash in the forest would not keep her from doing what she had been sent to Venus to do, if it lay within her power to do so.

She sat up in the darkness, being careful to put no weight on her left arm. Whether it was broken or not, she could not tell, but the throbbing pain warned her to favor it as much as she could.

"Wayne!" she shouted. "Wayne! Are you all right?"

No answer came from the pall of darkness surrounding her.

She fumbled in her jacket pocket for the tiny penlight she always carried, hoping that her fall had not damaged it. She pressed the switch and breathed a sigh of relief as the bright beam bathed the interior of the room with its radiance. She moved the beam about, trying to get her bearings.

It was quite evident that the ship had fallen on its side, for she found herself sitting on one wall.

As the spot from the brilliant beam shifted across the wall which had now become a floor, it touched that for which the girl was looking—a sprawled figure in one corner of the tipped room.

"Wayne!" Lanina gasped involuntarily.

Such was her concern for the man who lay unconscious there in the darkness

of the wrecked spaceship that she ignored the pain in her arm; indeed, she almost wholly forgot it as she stood up and walked across the metal wall toward him.

He lay there unmoving, a dark bruise on his forehead showing what had happened to render him thus. Lanina put her hand on his breast, hoping against hope, fearful lest she should feel no heartbeat.

Then the tension within her relaxed. The heart beat strongly and steadily. He was only stunned; perhaps, if she could move him—

And then she saw that she could not. A heavy piece of metal, a part of the deck which had been torn loose from its fastenings during the crash, pinned one foot securely to the wall beneath him.

A low moan came from the man's lips, and he turned his head slowly from side to side.

If only there were some water! the girl thought helplessly. But she knew there was none. The wrecking of the ship had ruined the power plant, as was evidenced by the failure of the lights. Without power, the ship's replenishers could not furnish its occupants with water.

Lanina could do nothing but caress the man's cheek until time, alone, allowed him to revive from the blow on his head.

After a long while, he opened his eyes and looked at her. "What—where are we?" he asked weakly.

Quickly, the girl told him what she knew of their predicament. He seemed to be in no pain; the blow of the heavy slab of metal had rendered his leg numb.

When she had finished her explanation, the man said grimly, "We might have known they'd get us, but it was our only chance. If we could only have contacted Dr. Neilson, we might have had a chance. Now, Earth will have to try again."

"Dr. Neilson is supposed to be somewhere in these jungles, Wayne. We may yet be able to contact him."

Wayne shook his head. "Not much chance. He's probably hundreds, maybe thousands, of miles away."

Lanina nodded. She realized the hopelessness of their plight, but she did not intend to show her feelings, nor did she intend to yield to despair.

"There isn't much we can do about our mission now, I'll admit," she said, "but if

we ever intend to do anything, we'll have to get you out from under that deck."

"You couldn't possibly lift it by yourself," Wayne said. "And the way it has my leg pinned, I couldn't move it, either. However, I think there is a way. You'll have to get the hydraulic lifter out of the engine room and get the deck up that way. It needs to be lifted only a few inches."

"I think that's the best way," the girl agreed. She turned around and pointed the flashlight's beam toward the wall where a door opened into the engine room.

"I can never get through that door!" she said in dismay. The metal of the wall had been warped in the accident, and the door itself was twisted in such a way that it was jammed tightly in the opening.

"I can see that," Wayne said. "It would take more force to open that door than it would to lift this deck. You'll have to go outside the ship and enter the engine room from the emergency hatch." A grimace of pain crossed his handsome face. "You'd better hurry," he continued, "my leg's beginning to hurt; the numbness is wearing off."

"I'll be back as soon as possible," she assured him.

It was fortunate that the ship had not landed on the side where the airlock was situated, or Lanina could never have made her way out of the smashed metal hulk. As it was, the port opened easily, and as it swung in, Lanina saw for the first time the misty beauty of the Venusian jungle.

Everywhere she looked there were great flowers, hanging from the thick, cable-like vines that looped through the branches of the trees. Against the dark, blue-green of the foliage, they stood out as bright spots of color.

Reds, blues, greens, yellows and purples sparkled brilliantly, while pastel shades of chartreuse, pink, lemon, and pale orange added their glowing softness to the panorama of color.

Never in her life, Lanina thought, had she seen anything to compare with the beauty around her.

Then her eyes looked down, and a shiver of terror coursed over her body. Below the airlock door, there was no solid ground—only a leafy, blue-green abyss that dropped into dimness and mist far

below. She knew, then, what had happened. The spaceship had not fallen to the jungle floor; it had come to rest on two mighty branches of a gigantic Empire tree!

One of the great branches, easily twelve feet thick and covered with the heavy, blossoming vines, supported the tail end of the battered spaceship; another, equally large, held the nose. There was no way she could get out of the ship!

To attempt to climb around on the smooth hull of the vessel, even with magnetic shoes, would have been foolhardy; the magnets were never meant to hold a human body against the pull of gravity; they were meant for gravityless action in the depths of space. And if she were to fall—

She shuddered again as she looked down into the empty depths below her.

How could she get to the engine room now? There was no way; she would have to think of some other method of freeing Wayne from the imprisoning weight of the massive metal deck.

A noise to her right brought her attention from the emptiness beneath the ship. She looked up, and what she saw made her voice a gasping cry.

Standing on a branch not ten feet from the open door of the spaceship were two things that looked like demons from some horrid nightmare. Short of stature they were, not more than four feet tall, with mottled blue-green skin and short, muscular limbs that bespoke great strength in spite of the diminutive size of the beings. Their mouths were wide and filled with small, pointed teeth. Above the mouth were two small nostrils, mere openings in a noseless face. The eyes were large and luminous and somehow managed to convey an impression of intelligence and craft.

In spite of their upright posture and large, well-shaped foreheads, Lanina could not help thinking that they looked like huge frogs.

She had seen photographs of Venusian natives before, but they were more frightening in reality than their photographs could ever be. Still, she forced down her terror and, remembering that some of the natives could understand English, she called out to them.

"I am a friend. My brother is hurt. I need help. Please!"

Neither of the Venusians

said a word, nor did they give any sign that they understood the tongue of the Earth girl.

Then another thought occurred to her. Dr. Neilson, the man she and Wayne were supposed to contact, had worked in these jungles for thirty years. Perhaps if she asked for him, they might give some sign, for it was known that Dr. Neilson was friendly with many of the natives.

"Do you know Dr. Neilson?" she asked. "We are friends of Dr. Neilson's. Doc-tor *Neil*-son." She repeated the name in hopes that the natives might recognize it, even if they understood no other English.

And indeed they did show signs of understanding, for they glanced at each other and one of them spoke in the rippling, fluid tongue of Venus.

But before the other could answer, another voice came.

"What about Dr. Neilson?" asked a deep, authoritative voice.

Lanina turned her head to see who had spoken and stared wide-eyed in surprise. Standing on another nearby branch was a tall, magnificently handsome man—an Earthman! He was almost naked; only a loincloth of soft, yellow-green fur covered his golden skin. He was taller than any man she had ever seen before, taller even than Wayne, and his shoulders were broad and powerfully muscled. The eyes that looked at her from beneath his frowning brows were a deep, cool blue. But the most outstanding thing about this handsome, golden giant was the flaming red hair that was brushed back from his high forehead in smooth waves.

"I asked you a question," he said calmly. "What about Dr. Neilson?"

CHAPTER II

KYVOR the Killer lay on his back, gazing indolently at the shifting silvery gray of the Venusian skies. The rough bark of the mighty tree limb upon which he reposed felt pleasant to his golden skin, and the warm, humid breeze which caressed his face enhanced the feeling of lassitude which had stolen over his muscular body.

And yet, relaxed though he may be, the keen senses of Kyvor the Killer were ever alert for danger. The reptilian predators which crept through the Venusian rain forest were silent and insid-

ious in their movements, and only a trained ear could detect their presence; only nostrils of utmost delicacy could tell their scent from the myriad of other aromas that permeated the moist air. And only by hard, never-ceasing training from childhood could an Earthman hope to stay alive in the jungles of Venus without elaborate protective equipment.

Thus it was that when Kyvor heard the faint rasp of calloused feet on the bark of a nearby branch, his every muscle was ready for instant action. But he did not leap to his feet, for his sensitive nostrils told him that the one who approached was a member of the Clan of Tivala. Indeed, it was only a few seconds later that the smiling figure of Polthan the Hunter stepped into view from behind a screen of leafy foliage.

"Good hunting, mighty Flame-head," said Polthan, using the customary Venusian greeting, and addressing the Earthman by his Venusian name. The name "Kyvor" means, literally, "He - who - has - flame - on - his - head," for the Clan of Tivala, as the natives call themselves, have no hair; and not even the furred animals have hair that is red or brown.

"Good hunting, Polthan," returned Kyvor. "You seem to be excited—more excited, I dare say, than the mere killing of a glith would warrant."

Polthan's thick lips split in a broad smile, disclosing the rows of small, sharp teeth. "Indeed, it is so, mighty Kyvor," Polthan said. "Did you not hear the scream in the jungle?"

"I heard it," Kyvor admitted, "but it sounded like a dying sslis."

"Not nearby," Polthan corrected, shaking his head. "I know you have never heard the sound in your life, but we of Tivala who are older heard it often in years gone by. It was a spaceship landing."

Kyvor leaped to his feet. "Where? Take me there quickly, Polthan! If they are agents of the Empire, they will bear close watching."

"I think we need have no fear, Kyvor," said Polthan; "the vessel was out of control and crashed. No doubt the occupants were killed."

"If you did not investigate, you can not know," Kyvor said. "Come, show me the ship."

Polthan nodded quickly and scurried off through

the trees, running along branches, and leaping the gaps between the great trees by swinging along the cable-like vines that festooned the limbs in the upper forest. Behind him, with equal ease, sped Kyvor the Killer.

As he moved through the jungle, Kyvor's keen mind dwelt on the possibilities of a spaceship here in the jungle.

It had been very long since the young giant had set eyes on his own kind. Since the death of his parents, years before, he had not seen a human being. His only friends, his people, were the Clan of Tivala. He had been only a child when his mother had at last succumbed to fever, weakened by the despair in her heart after the murder of her husband, Kyvor's father.

Even then, child though he had been, he was as large, physically, as the greatest warrior of the Clan. And the Clanspeople had adopted him, teaching him those things which a young warrior needs to know in the rain forest of Venus. He knew what plants to avoid, and which plants could be useful to him. He had learned how to kill the herbivorous glith and protect himself from the fierce, ravenous attacks of the sslis.

And as he had grown to young manhood, he had become stronger and more agile than any of the Clan, and their primitive minds had come to look upon him as a god-king, rather than as a simple chieftain. The books and papers of his father he had read and re-read until everything in that vast library was engraved permanently in his facile mind.

And now, for the first time in years, he might again see a human face. Perhaps, as Polthan had said, they were dead; perhaps, as he himself surmised, they were agents of the Empire. But they were nonetheless human, and Kyvor felt, deep within his savage breast, the desire to see a human being once again.

Polthan felt a little ashamed that he had been chastised by Kyvor. Was it not sensible to assume that anything falling from so great a height would kill those within it? Polthan thought so, and yet Kyvor knew more of such things, even though he had never seen a spaceship. Kyvor had many "books" which spoke to him silently when he looked

at them, and they told him many wise things. The arts of writing and reading were beyond the intellect of Polthan's people.

Since Kyvor had cast doubt upon the death of the vessel's occupants, then it was extremely likely that it must be so. Therefore, Polthan reasoned, it *must* be so.

The people of the Clan of Tivala, though ignorant of the complexities of Earth's civilization, were wise in the equally complex ways of the jungle. The rapid movement of Kyvor and the faithful Polthan through the upper reaches of the great forest did not go unnoticed by its denizens, nor had the falling of the spaceship been observed by Polthan alone. Thus it was that when Kyvor and his guide reached the spot where the broken ship hung in the tree, many of the Tivala were gathered around it, keeping well hidden in the greenery that surrounded the ship.

Mylthat the Trapper hurried over to where Kyvor stood watching the ship.

"We have seen nothing, Fiery One," he whispered, "but there have been noises within the vessel, clangings of metal upon metal."

Polthan nodded. "They are alive, of course," he said. "We shall kill them when they emerge."

Mylthat clenched his hand around his short-spear. "As soon as they open the round door, they die."

Kyvor the Killer had been surveying the disabled ship, ignoring the low conversation of the two Tivala, but when Mylthat shook his short-spear, the tall Earthman looked down at him. "No, Mylthat, that will not be necessary. They cannot get out of the ship; there are no vines close enough to allow them to climb out, since they were torn out by the ship's fall. And, even should they manage to get out, it would be better to wait until they are all out, where they will be more vulnerable to our weapons."

"It is as Kyvor says," agreed Polthan.

"Listen!" Kyvor's voice carried a tone of command. "One of them is opening the airlock! Silence!"

At his order, the Clan of Tivala became motionless and silent. Following their leader's command they waited.

Kyvor thought himself ready for anything, but he was totally unprepared for the door to swing inward and

disclose the face of a beautiful, golden-haired girl.

He could tell that she was frightened, but the nobility and beauty of her soft oval face impressed him deeply. It was difficult to believe that such a lovely creature could be an agent of the Empire. But what else could she be?

The girl looked around her in wonder for a few moments, then looked down at the vast open space beneath her and gasped. She seemed fascinated by the sheer depth of the leafy, blue-green abyss.

"Quickly!" Kyvor whispered to the two standing beside him; "go out to the branch near her while she is not looking. Do nothing and say nothing. Just stand where she can see you."

Then he gave orders to the others while Polthan and Mylthat scurried to do his bidding. "Aim your blowguns at the girl; if she attempts to harm Polthan or Mylthat, kill her."

It was an order he did not like to give; the beauty and apparent innocence of the girl did not bespeak evil intent. But she was nonetheless an enemy, or at least a stranger, while the two Tivala were his friends.

When the girl looked up at last and saw the two Tivala standing before her, Kyvor was again forced to grudging admiration of her bravery. She did not run back into the ship, nor did she draw a weapon. Instead, she spoke, and her voice was clear and soft, without the slightest trace of fear.

"I am a friend. My brother is hurt. I need help. Please!"

Kyvor narrowed his eyes. It might be a trap, but if so, it was a crude one. Besides, the girl's voice had a ring of sincerity. Still, if they were agents of the Empire, there was no need to save their lives; they would only become dangerous later. And yet, there were many questions to be answered. Why had they come here? What were they looking for? Why had the ship crashed?

The girl's voice came again. "Do you know Dr. Neilson? We are friends of Dr. Neilson's. Doc-tor *Neil*-son."

At her mention of that name, Kyvor decided that he would have to take personal hand in dealing with the girl. He strode out on a nearby branch and folded his arms over his chest. "What about Dr. Neilson?" he asked.

The startled girl turned her head to look at him, and

her gray eyes grew wide with fear and surprise. She said nothing, so Kyvor repeated his question.

"We—we've come to see him," the girl replied. "Who are you?"

"I am known as Kyvor," he said simply. "Why do you want to see Dr. Neilson? Who are you?"

The girl had claimed to be a friend of Dr. Neilson's, and Kyvor well knew that she had never met the doctor.

Lanina Harrison paused. She had no idea who this golden giant might be; he could very well be an agent of the Venusian Empire, in which case it would be foolish and dangerous to reveal the identity of herself and her brother. And yet, the spaceship itself was real and damaging evidence against her. The handsome demigod must know that she did not come from Empire City.

"Our ship was damaged," she said at last. "We were forced to land here, and we knew that Dr. Neilson's headquarters were in this area. We thought perhaps he could help us."

"You speak of 'we,'" Kyvor said. "Who else is aboard?"

He knew that there was something odd about the girl's story, but he had correctly deduced that she intended to tell him nothing, so he asked her nothing more about herself.

"Only my brother and I are aboard," she said. "He's inside; his leg has been crushed under a piece of deck, and he can't move. Please, if you have any kindness about you, help us!"

Kyvor paused for only a moment. Well he knew that there might be danger within the ship, but his instinct told him that the girl was telling the truth. He grasped a vine, and with one graceful leap swung over the open space to the lip of the airlock.

"Take me to your brother," he said.

Lanina led him back to where Wayne Harrison lay in the darkness of the ship. He did not move, nor did he speak when Lanina called out his name; he had fainted again from the pain in his leg.

From the illumination of the girl's flashlight, Kyvor could see that the young man bore a striking resemblance to his sister, although his face was more angular and masculine.

Lanina watched as Kyvor walked over to the metal deck plate and grasped it with one

hand. She saw his mighty thews ripple under the golden skin, and the deck lifted as easily as if it were made of cardboard. With his free hand, Kyvor gently moved the injured man's foot from beneath the mass of metal. Then he lowered the deck again, and without another word, he picked up the unconscious man in his arms and strode toward the airlock. Lanina followed him, not knowing what else to do or what to expect.

CHAPTER III

SEVERAL hundred miles to the north of the spot where the spaceship had landed, four heavy armored tanks lumbered southward. The column moved in single file, their headlights gleaming in the misty dimness of the jungle floor.

In the lead tank, Major Lyman Reeder, of the Imperial Venusian Army, scowled darkly and cursed venemously under his breath.

"Why so angry, Major?" asked Captain Bock, the second in command.

"I don't like the idea of bringing a nurse along," the major said. "Women don't belong on a military expedition. They are always and forever in the way. We needed a doctor, yes. But not a nurse."

That was not the real reason for the major's anger, although it irritated him. Actually, he had no real desire to be heading a military expedition into the jungle. He would much rather have stayed in Empire City, making the rounds of the cafes, attending the various social functions of Imperial society. He thoroughly disliked the idea of plunging into the unknown depths of the Venusian jungles. There was, of course, nothing he could do about it; had he begged off, he would have been disgraced and called a coward in the social circles of Empire City. In fact, it was doubtful that he could have begged off; the order to find the fallen spaceship, and capture prisoners if possible, had come straight from the Emperor himself, and Derek II was not a monarch who rescinded his personal orders.

Major Reeder had to go, but he most certainly did not have to like it. Therefore, his disposition was irritable and his treatment of the men under him harsh.

Captain John Bock didn't

object; as a matter of fact, he was rather glad that he had been assigned to the expedition. He knew that the Emperor was anxious to capture whoever had been in the mysterious ship, and he was determined that he would get his share of the credit for the success of the expedition. Well he knew the weaknesses of his commander, and he intended to take every advantage of them.

"Why do you think the ship came here, sir?" the captain asked conversationally.

"Who knows?" snapped the major. "I can tell you this, though: Any ship from Earth is a potential danger to the Empire. Ever since Derek I declared Venus to be separate from the government of Earth, we have known that the President of Earth would do everything in his power to see that the Empire is destroyed. The democratic earthlings claim that a government by aristocracy is despotic. Bah! Can you imagine a world where the common rabble is permitted a voice in the government? There can be no such thing."

"It does seem foolish in the extreme," Captain Bock agreed. "Our ancestors, who colonized Venus, were wise to cut themselves loose from the bonds that tied them to a decadent society."

The major, who knew nothing of history and cared even less, merely snorted. "Nevertheless," he said, "Earth has always been a threat to us, and always will be until its society collapses into anarchy."

Captain Bock nodded in agreement, but he privately disagreed with Major Reeder. The Empire controlled the spots on Venus where a spaceship could land: the broad, flat salt plains of the North. All the rest was jungle, swamps, and mountains. Earth could not possibly land a fleet of ships to invade, since the heavy blaster guns could shoot them out of the sky before they could touch the ground. Neither could they bomb the Empire from space, for the heavy blasters could hit a bomb as easily as a spaceship. Earth could win only by destroying the whole planet, and there would be no point in doing that.

He wondered, nevertheless, why this lone ship had come from Earth. What could they hope to accomplish? The ship had attempted to land in the great marshes just out of range of the blasters; but

they had underestimated the range of the huge guns, and a near hit had disabled them. They had fled to the south, only to crash into the vast rain forest. Whoever had been aboard her would most certainly have died in the crash, but, even so, there would be clues aboard her which might disclose her purpose in coming here.

While the captain pondered thusly, the column of tanks moved on over the thick moss that covered the jungle floor. Like four tiny ants crawling around the vast pillars of a cathedral, they wound their torturous way through the towering Empire trees. The great forest monarchs, some of them a full quarter of a mile in diameter, seemed to ignore the small crawling things beneath them as a man would ignore an insect at his feet.

On and on they moved through the dimness of the jungle until at last the pearly light in the sky began to fade and the utter blackness of the Venusian night settled over them. Not until then did the major call a halt.

The four tanks were formed into a hollow square, and the space between them was blocked with heavy steel fencing. Outside this, an electrical barrier was set up which would kill any small animal and stun or frighten larger ones. Powerful searchlights were set up to illuminate the area, and sentries were posted around the camp. Then the soldiers made ready to eat their evening meal and retire until morning.

In one corner of the compound, a special tent had been set up, and Major Reeder eyed it with open dislike.

"That," he said to Captain Bock, "is exactly what I mean when I say that a woman is a nuisance on a military expedition. She has to have special attention, special quarters, special everything.

"Captain, I'm going to make her your responsibility. I would just as soon she didn't bother me."

"Yes, sir," replied the captain. "I'll see that she doesn't annoy you." Inwardly, he smiled at his superior's order. He hadn't dared to hope that he would have such luck; his scheming mind had already worked out a way to undermine his commanding officer and take credit for the expedition himself. Because he knew that the young nurse was already angry with the major's tyrannical methods,

he hoped to use her in his scheme, and the major's order fell in with his plans. And, too, he had other plans for the girl herself.

Excusing himself from the major's company, he strolled across the compound toward the nurse's tent. When he reached it, he tapped on the aluminum frame of the door to the tent.

"Who is it?" came a clear contralto voice from within.

"Captain Bock," said the officer. "May I come in?"

"Certainly, Captain," said the nurse. She was seated at a table with Captain Ashley, the elderly medical officer.

Bock had expected to find the girl alone, and he was somewhat discomfited to see them both.

"Good evening, Lieutenant Summers; Captain Ashley; I hope you're both comfortable. How did the first day go?"

"Not badly, "replied Captain Ashley, "although I must say riding in a tank with nine other men is not my idea of comfort."

"I hope my men didn't bother you," said Bock. "If they do, I shall see that they are disciplined."

Dora Summers looked up at the young captain. He might have been handsome, except for the cruelty in his dark eyes, which showed through in spite of the engaging smile on his face.

"Your men didn't bother me, Captain," she said; "they seem very well trained."

"As well trained as it is possible to train peasants," Captain Bock agreed.

Nurse Summers said nothing. Not by so much as a flicker of her lustrous brown eyes did she betray the thought that passed through her mind.

Captain Ashley stretched his arms wide. "I'm really getting too old for this sort of thing," he said. "Frankly, I doubt that a doctor will be needed. If the crash didn't kill the people in the spaceship, I dare say they'll be dead by the time we get there. An unprotected human being can't last long in the jungles of Venus." He yawned and stood up. "Frankly, I'm going to get some sleep—I need it. Goodnight."

Captain Bock and the nurse bade him goodnight as he pushed open the door of the aluminum-cloth tent and went out to his own quarters.

As soon as he had gone, Captain Bock turned again to the nurse. "The major was

rather harsh with you this morning, wasn't he?"

Lieutenant Summers just shrugged her smooth shoulders. "He's the commanding officer here. I have to take orders like anyone else."

"True," the captain agreed, "but I think he's much too overbearing with everyone. Even a common soldier has some rights." He looked searchingly into the dark, soft eyes of the woman. "If you want my opinion, I think we need a psychiatrist along instead of a medical doctor."

Dora Summers met his gaze steadily, and she, too, was attempting to read the brain behind those eyes. "Do you mean that you think Major Reeder is insane?"

The captain laughed and shook his head. "No, Dora, I didn't say that. You did. However, I won't disagree with you. Perhaps—" His smile faded, and he left the sentence unfinished.

He rose from his seat, said goodnight, and left. Dora Summers watched him leave and wondered what sort of man the captain really was. Could she trust him? She felt that she had to trust someone, but what would Captain Bock's reaction be if he discovered that she was not the well-born lady she claimed to be, but only a commoner? She did not know, and until she could be more sure of the young officer, she decided it would be more prudent to hold her tongue.

Restless, she stood up and walked outside the tent to take a breath of fresh air. The humidity of the jungle breeze seemed to be less in the evening.

Around her she could see nothing except the camp itself. Beyond the glare of the brilliant spotlights, there seemed to be nothing but impenetrable darkness.

Thus, she could not see the pair of large, glowing eyes that sought her out in the glare of the lights, eyes that watched from the jungle and remained fastened upon the door to her aluminum tent after she had gone inside and shut off the light.

CHAPTER IV

LANINA HARRISON massaged the wrist of her left hand. There was little pain in it, but a slight tenderness remained. Fortunately, it had only been a slight sprain.

Wayne, on the other hand, had not had his sister's good luck. His foot had been broken, and only the skill of

their unknown benefactor had saved the limb. As it was, Kyvor had set the fracture so well that Wayne was able to hobble about on a pair of crutches without paining himself too much.

At the moment, he was seated on a rude, but serviceable couch that stood against one wall of the room where they stayed.

"It just doesn't seem possible," Wayne said as he looked about him; "to think that we're actually inside a tree!"

"Kyvor says that the Empire trees are filled with such hollows as this," Lanina said. "The natives widen them and polish the inside walls to give them the finish."

Indeed, the room, primitive though it might be, had an air of grandeur about it, for the walls looked as though they were made of paneled mahogany, smoothly varnished and polished to a high lustre. It was a large room, and yet, in comparison, it was only a tiny scar in the vast bulk of the mighty tree.

There was a rustling at the entranceway, and a huge hand pulled aside the bark-cloth that concealed the entrance from outside eyes.

The flame-haired giant smiled as he stepped inside the tree-cavern room. "How do you feel, Wayne? Foot still hurt?"

"I think it's all right," the Earthman said. "Still throbs a little, but what can you expect of a broken leg?"

Kyvor seemed to be enjoying some private joke which neither of the others understood. They had told him that they were merely citizens of Empire City who were trying to test a new type of spaceship. Something had gone wrong, they said, and the ship had crashed. Otherwise, they had told him nothing.

And, in return, Kyvor had asked them nothing. He had no need to; his eyes and his ears told him more than the two Earthlings suspected. He knew by their slight accents that they had not come from Empire City; more, he could see that their clothing, although cut in the Empire style, were not made on Venus. His keen eyes could detect subtle differences in the cut and make of the cloth that would go unnoticed to ordinary human eyes. Long years in the Venusian jungles had sharpened his senses far beyond those of the average man.

"Well," he said quietly, "I suppose you're ready, now, to

be taken to Empire City. You'll want to get back home."

Lanina and her brother glanced at each other, and the message that passed between them did not pass unnoticed by the golden-skinned giant, who smiled slightly to himself.

Suddenly, he could contain himself no longer. Kyvor's vast sense of humor bubbled over and he began laughing at the plight of the two before him.

"I'm sorry," he said at last, when his laughter had subsided. "I didn't mean to frighten you. But why didn't you tell me you were Earth agents? Was it because you thought I was an agent of the so-called Venusian Empire? What Empire man would stay out here in the jungle when he could have the comforts of the city?"

Wayne Harrison smoothed back his blond hair with a muscular hand. "Then you've known all along?"

Kyvor nodded. "Ever since I first heard you speak. And, too, the evidence aboard the ship shows that it isn't of Venusian origin. Besides, you asked about Dr. Neilson; that was a dead giveaway, in itself. Everyone on Venus knows that Dr. Neilson is dead."

Young Harrison looked at the fire-haired young giant in astonishment. "Dead? But he assured Earth that he was in no danger; he said that he could stay away from the Empire's police forever, if necessary."

Kyvor nodded. "He was right. But there was more to it than that. Let me tell you what I know, then you can tell me what has taken place on Earth.

"Twenty years ago, Neilson contacted Earth. He had a plan for allowing Earth forces to land to overthrow the Empire and free the so-called 'commoners' from the slavery of the Empire's aristocrats and set up a democratic government on Venus. For five years, he carried on radio communication with Earth. Then communication was stopped, but Neilson assured Earth that there was nothing wrong. Since then he has not been heard from."

Lanina said: "That's right. We were sent to contact Neilson; there was hope that he was still alive. His last message told us that he needed new supplies for his radio, that some of the transistors were nearly burned out. No further mes-

sages were received, but it was assumed that the doctor had simply been unable to get new supplies. Finally, after fifteen years, the Earth decided that if one ship could get through to him, we could help him bring his plan about. Unfortunately—"

"Unfortunately," finished Kyvor, "you didn't know two things. You didn't know that the small landing field he told you of was now occupied by the Empire, and you didn't know that he had been killed. This changes your plans.

"In order to get parts for his radio, he stole secretly into Empire City, the only place where they could be had. He was captured and tortured to death. But he died without revealing his headquarters." When he said this last, the flashing blue eyes of Kyvor became as cold as the blue ice of Earth's Arctic.

"Do you know where his headquarters were?" Lanina asked.

Kyvor nodded. "I do," he said. "I am the only living human being who does know. The things he worked with should never fall into the hands of the Emperor of Venus. Derek II would become a tyrant, the like of which has never been seen, if the secrets in Dr. Neilson's laboratory were to become his."

Wayne Harrison's gray eyes blazed with sudden interest. "How do you know so much, Kyvor? Who *are* you, anyway?"

"My real name is Glen Neilson," Kyvor said quietly. "I am Dr. Neilson's son." He stopped a moment, remembering. Then he said: "I have lived in these jungles all my life. I was reared by the Clan of Tivala. I am the only Earthman who is not hated by the tree people of Venus."

The red-haired young giant had no further opportunity to explain his background. A small, blue-green figure darted into the room and spoke in the rippling tongue of the Clan of Tivala. The Earthlings could understand no word of it, but they could easily see the excitement of the speaker.

When he had finished and scampered out again, Kyvor spoke to the Earthman. "Wayne, the Empire has spotted the place where your ship crashed. Even now, there is a column of tanks coming through the forest toward us. Polthan the Hunter says that they are only a day away."

Wayne's heavy blond brows

furrowed in thought. "They'll find the ship, of course; their detectors will tell them where it is. And they'll know we're alive. When they report back—"

"Don't worry about that," Kyvor said. "I'll see to it that they don't report back." He stood up and strode out the door of the tree cave.

Lanina Harrison sprang to her feet and rushed out after him. "Kyvor! Wait! What are you going to do?" When she had left the room, she had run out on the mighty branch that projected out from beneath the hole in the bark; but she took no notice of that, for the branch was fully ten feet thick and therefore easy to walk on without losing balance.

Kyvor turned to look at her. "What am I going to do? I'm going to get rid of an enemy patrol. I've done it before; there's nothing to fear."

The Earth girl reached out and touched him gently with one hand. "Don't—don't get hurt." And then, suddenly, she threw her arms about him and lay her head against his mighty chest. "Please be careful! Please!"

"He's been gone for hours," said Lanina Harrison, pacing back and forth across the room.

"Relax, honey," Wayne told her. "That man knows his way around these jungles. He's stayed alive this long; he'll stay alive a lot longer." He looked up at his sister knowingly. "You've fallen in love with the guy, haven't you?"

Lanina turned, her eyes blazing. "Well, what if I have? Can you imagine anyone better to fall in love with?"

Wayne shook his head. "No, I can't," he confessed. "The man's magnificent. But —does he love you?"

Lanina clenched her fists and closed her eyes. "I don't know," she said softly. "I don't know."

Wayne stood up on his crutches and hobbled across the room. "I hate to disillusion you, honey, but I think you ought to take everything into account before you make any decision." He pushed open the door to the next room, the one where Kyvor slept. "Come here, Lanina. Kyvor talked with me for a while in here. I know I'm intruding on his privacy to show you this, but I think you should know." He flung the door open wide and pointed within. The flickering

glow of the oil lamps which illuminated the hidden recesses within the tree glowed fitfully over the far wall of the room. And there, Lanina could see a life-size photograph of a young, dark-haired, brown-eyed, beautiful girl.

And, inscribed beneath it were the words: "To Kyvor, with all my love."

Kyvor the Killer raced through the branches of the upper terrace, moving steadily and unerringly toward the place where the tank column had been spotted. He took with him no provisions, for they would only serve to slow his rapid pace through the jungle. His only necessities were the knife and rope that hung at his side; he could live off the land as well as any other inhabitant of the Venusian rain forest, and, indeed, preferred to do so.

When Dr. Simon Neilson, one of the most brilliant scientists who had ever lived, had fled into the jungles of Venus to keep his secrets out of the hands of the despotic Empire, he had taken with him his wife and small son. Since early childhood, young Glen had been raised and taught by the Clan of Tivala, with whom his scientist father had become friendly. While Dr. Neilson worked in his hidden laboratory, Kyvor, the Fire Hair, had played with the young Tivala children and learned their ways.

Then Simon Neilson had gone back to Empire City for badly needed equipment, and had never returned. Shortly thereafter, his beloved mother had succumbed to fever and loneliness, leaving Kyvor in the hands of the faithful people of the Clan of Tivala. And they had not failed in their duty; day by day and year by year they had taught the lad the secrets of the jungle, secrets he needed in order to survive. The boy had learned well; indeed, because of his superior brain, he soon surpassed his instructors, until now the Clan looked upon the young giant as one almost akin to the gods.

Knowing his father's hatred for the Empire, and knowing how they had killed him and indirectly caused the death of his mother, an intense hatred of the Empire had been instilled in Kyvor's own mind. Often they had sent patrols and expeditions into the jungle, and each time Kyvor heard of one, he had proceeded as he was proceeding now—to wipe it out.

Perhaps, Kyvor reflected,

it was not quite right to think of Lanina and her brother as the only humans he had seen since his parents' death. Still, it was only with effort that he could bring himself to think of the soldiers of the Emperor as being human. Their savagery and cruelty were such that they scarcely deserved the honor of being called men.

Never once on these expeditions had he spoken to one of the soldiers. He had killed them by using his vast knowledge of the jungle, and left their bodies to the mercies of the carnivores and carrion-eaters of the jungle. When all was over, the machines were left to rust, while the winged dak-lizards swooped ever lower toward the corpses, and the small, jackal-like thelks crept out of the underbrush to feed.

CHAPTER V

THAT evening, Kyvor slowed his steady movement through the jungle and began to search for food for his evening repast. The faithful Polthan swung by his side through the heavy vines of the forest, sniffing the air with his flat nostrils.

Suddenly Kyvor changed direction, veering off sharply to the right. Polthan followed, for he, too, had scented the glith.

The big beast, hanging upside-down from a limb, moved slowly along, munching leaves and flowers from the liana vines. Kyvor and Polthan crept up silently and watched. Great care must be taken to catch glith. If he is killed outright, he will simply fall, hundreds of feet, to the jungle floor below. Before a hunter could reach him, the flesh would be despoiled by the thousands of tiny, thumb-sized carrion beetles that rush from their burrows in the moss whenever anything edible falls from above. The little eaters of dead could burrow into a body within a few seconds, rendering it unfit for consumption because of the noxious secretions of their bodies.

Thus it was that the glith had to be taken by more subtle means.

Carefully unreeling his rope, Kyvor prepared a noose, and with unerring accuracy threw it over the blunt, thick-necked head of the browsing monster. Immediately, the animal reached out with one great claw and began to tear at the offending strand of rope.

Then Kyvor leaped. Grasp-

ing the animal with one mighty arm about his throat, Kyvor plunged his knife again and again into its side, searching for the huge heart that beat beneath the protective hide.

Screaming with pain, the great beast released his hold on the branch and dropped. But the rope that Kyvor had fastened to a higher branch held, and the fall was stopped as abruptly as it had begun as the glith jerked helplessly at the end of the rope.

Still the great animal did not die. Tough were his great neck muscles, and strong the will to live within his heart. His great tree-holding talons slashed back, trying to dislodge the human from his back. But Kyvor was not to be cheated of his prey. His powerful arms and legs held their grip about the glith's body, and his knife sought once more the heart of the beast.

The glith's motions began to become more sluggish, and at last it moved no more. Then, hand over hand, his bloody knife clenched between his teeth, Kyvor the Killer climbed up the rope which held the huge body suspended from the limb above.

As soon as he had reached the limb, he began pulling up the glith and before long, he and Polthan were tearing with their teeth at the raw chunks of flesh that had been hacked off the dead herbivore.

After they had sated themselves, the giant Earthman and the small Venusian found a small cavern in the trunk of a nearby tree and lodged themselves for the night there to rest and wait.

Lieutenant Dora Summers pointed at the drug cabinet and said: "I tell you, Dr. Ashley, someone has been taking llomar powder from the drug supply!"

Captain Ashley looked at the calibrated vials and nodded. "You're right, Nurse. There's a good deal of it missing. When did you first notice that it was gone?"

"Just a few minutes ago," the nurse replied. "Just before I called you."

The physician frowned. "I couldn't believe it at first," he said. "I can't see why anyone would want to take it. It's not a narcotic, nor a stimulant. Why would anyone want to steal the llomar drug?"

Lieutenant Summers was almost sure she knew, but it was not her business to make

wild guesses. She merely asked: "It's a poison, isn't it?"

Dr. Ashley nodded. "Yes, but not in the usual sense. It attacks the nerves, and specifically attacks the cerebrum —the thinking part of the brain."

The two of them were standing in the hospital hut, on the fourth night out from Empire City. The journey had been slow and monotonous; the dreadful tales they had heard about the dangers of the Venusian rain forest had not seemed to have come true. Instead of deadly danger, there was only the utter sameness of the unchanging jungle.

"I suppose I had better notify Major Reeder," Captain Ashley said thoughtfully. "Steps will have to be taken to insure against further losses."

Dora watched as the captain walked across the compound. She knew in her heart that only one man could have stolen the llomar powder.

Captain Ashley rapped on the door of the major's tent. At the sound of the voice that bade him come in, he pushed open the door—

—and was confronted by a madman!

Major Lyman Reeder was foaming at the mouth; his eyes were wild and red—bloodshot with hate.

"Aha! There you are!" he cackled madly. "I'm going to kill you, you know! Haha! I'm going to kill you!"

Dr. Ashley knew then what had happened to the llomar drug—someone had given it to Major Reeder!

He could hardly manage to get out of the insane man's way. It was too late! The major was charging straight for him, and the captain couldn't possibly avoid him in time!

Lanina Harrison looked over at the couch where her brother was sleeping soundly. She was glad that the pain in his foot had subsided at last to the point where he could sleep, but she was worried about Kyvor. What had happened to the red-haired giant? He had been gone now nearly two days. Had the Empire soldiers killed him? Or had he met some worse fate?

She could not know. The tiny green Venusians could not tell her, for they spoke no English; and she, in turn, was unable to speak the tongue of the Clan of Tivala. But, she decided, she must know what had happened to the golden-skinned man who had won her love.

Quietly, she walked over to the crude desk which stood on squat legs in one corner of the room. Dipping the ancient steel pen in ink, she wrote a few lines. Then she put the piece of paper on Wayne's chest, where he would be sure to see it when he awoke.

Then, buckling her weapon belt around her slim waist, she stepped outside and began to walk quietly along the wide branch of the great tree.

All around her glowed the phosphorescent flowers of the great vines, shimmering in their various colors in the blackness of the Venusian night. They stored the light that fell upon them by day and glowed at night, filling the darkness with a soft light that was just barely enough to see by, provided one had exceptionally keen vision.

Lanina had a keen sense of direction. Although she was by no means trained to live in the jungle, she nevertheless was capable of acting in an emergency; and her senses were, in spite of their comparative weakness, still a great deal better than the average man's. So, stepping carefully along the branches, she moved toward the spaceship that had crashed far off in the jungle.

She walked carefully; she could not hope to equal the daring swings across space that Kyvor performed with such apparent ease and daring; but, nonetheless, she did not feel afraid as she walked along, jumping from one branch to another, making long detours where an easy jump was not feasible.

She could not, however, hope to equal the silence of Kyvor. Her every step made the bark beneath her feet crackle. She tried to steal along quietly, but her heavy, solid space boots made the bark crunch every time she shifted her weight. But to her, this was of little consequence. She could hear it only slightly, and naively assumed that no other denizen of the jungle could hear better than she could. She did not know that before she had moved twenty yards there were others in the trees who watched her with glowing eyes and followed her silently. Amid the shining liana blossoms the eye could not be seen, but they watched and moved, nonetheless.

It took her a long time to navigate her way through the upper terrace. In half an hour, she had covered a distance that would have taken

a Venusian child less than five minutes.

She knew that the tank column had spotted the place where her ship had crashed, and she knew that Kyvor, if he were still alive, would be somewhere near the wreckage.

Sense of direction though she had, Lanina knew nothing of the dangers that surrounded her. Although the motions and sounds in the jungle disturbed her, she did not know what they were, and the distant hissing roar of a sslis meant nothing to her. She could not know that the reptilian carnivore had scented her and was already moving cautiously toward her after giving his single hunting warning.

Distant as he was, the reptile nonetheless moved through his familiar surroundings much more rapidly than the prey ahead. He paused now and then, sniffing the air, trying to decide just what sort of animal it was that lay ahead. It really did not matter to the sslis, for in his tiny brain there was no room for fear; he did not know what it was, but he knew that it was food, and he knew that he was a match for any animal that roamed the forest. On and on he pressed, moving with a catlike grace that no terrestrial reptile ever achieved. For the Venusian sslis, like all other Venusian reptiles, is more highly developed than any Earth lizard.

At last the hungry carnivore spotted his victim. He stopped for a moment, eyeing her, wondering what her flesh would taste like; but he knew that she was not dangerous. She had no claws, no teeth, no protection of any kind. True, she walked upright, as did the blue-green things with the blowguns, but she was obviously not of their species; she was larger, and would provide a better meal.

He moved on, stalking the girl, waiting until she should get to a place where there would be no danger of her falling to the ground below. The sslis did not want to lose this choice morsel to the carrion beetles.

Lanina walked carefully along the intertwining limbs and branches, moving from tree to tree by crawling carefully across the vines that tied one tree to another. And then she realized that she had made a mistake; she had walked out on a great branch which, she presumed, led to the next tree. But it did not;

only forty feet out from the mighty trunk of the Empire tree, it came to a dead end. At some time in the past, it had been broken off, perhaps by a lightning bolt, perhaps by internal weakness. Now, it was only a jagged stump.

Realizing that she would have to take another route, she turned to retrace her steps. But the sslis, too, had seen her error, and when she turned, Lanina saw before her the glowing red eyes of the most feared killer on Venus.

In the glowing light of the fluorescent flowers, Lanina could only dimly see the carnivore, but there was no doubt in her mind that it was a killer. It looked something like a terrestrial tiger, but its snout was longer, and it was earless. A ridge of spines ran along its back and down the long, reptilian tail. Slowly, it stalked toward her.

And then, with a terrifying, hissing shriek, it leaped!

(To be continued)

"I can't wait to see how it comes out."

I'M NOT a very sociable drinker in a public bar. I'm not snooty, it's just that I don't care to mix my drinks with dreary stories or barflies. So, naturally, I was very annoyed when a little old man with a thin, wrinkled face strutted in, slid onto a stool beside me and, pointing at Benny, said briskly:

"Want me to change him into a pelican?"

I just pretended that I didn't hear him.

Benny came rushing down and shouted in his face: "Awright, awright! I'm tellin' yuh again—cut oud annoyin' my reg'lar customers!"

He gave Benny a hurt look out of his strange blue eyes. "I'm not bothering anyone." His thin, pale lips trembled, as if he were about to weep. "I only told him that I could change you into a pelican—which I most certainly can."

"You wuz in here las' night givin' everybody a bad time! Wot's it dis time?"

"Cognac."

"Yuh got da do-re-mi?"

The fantastic little man's eyes blinked rapidly. He took off his green Tyrolese hat and handed it to Benny. His head was bald as a door-knob. "I'd be glad to leave this as collateral until tomorrow."

Benny shoved the hat

A NIGHT IN BENNY'S BAR

By WILMON MENARD

Ever sit at a bar and have some character edge up to you and try to cadge a drink? It happens in the best regulated taverns. It happened at Benny's but with results we're sure are unique in the history of panhandling. See what you think.

back. "G'wan, scram!" he roared.

My self-elected drinking-buddy turned to me with heart - rending melancholy concentrated in his puckish face. "If you'll buy me a small cognac, I'll really change this ape into a pelican."

Benny reached over and grabbed him hard by the lapels of his linen jacket. "I sed, lay off him! Mister Ogelthorpe is jes' in here for a quiet drink, so he don' wanna lissun to deadbeats like you!" He started shaking him until his teeth chattered like castanets. "An' don' give *me* none of yer guff, neider!"

"Keep your paws off me!" screeched the little man, jerking free. "Otherwise I'll change you into a juke-box. You'll feel mighty uncomfortable with cold coins dropping into your fat guts and your head full of rock-and-roll bedlam."

Benny started around the end of the bar.

I put up a restraining hand. "Whoa, now! Let's not have any rough-house. Give him a drink, Benny, and that'll be the end of it."

Benny stopped and let out his breath very slowly. Then, very nastily, he said: "Jes' as you wish, *Sir*. But, remember, dat I warned yuh."

The booby-hatch escapist held out a cordial hand. "My name is Hector Wumpson." Then, swallowing hard, seemingly with some embarrassment, he added: "I'm a magician."

I smiled tolerantly. "That's very interesting, Mr. Wumpson."

"You know what I mean when I say 'Magician'?"

"Oh, I've read about Houdini—and I saw the movie."

"No, no!" protested Hector. "He was a fake. I'm a bona fide magician. I *can really do things!*" He narrowed his eyes on Benny. "Just wait until I finish my cognac, then I'll show you something you won't forget as long as you live."

"Oh, you don't have to feel obligated," I said. "But don't rile Benny, because when he blows his top he can be very mean."

Hector compressed his lips on a stubborn resolve. "The slob insulted me. Anyway, I feel in the mood to perform some nifty wizardry."

Benny lurched back and banged the cognac down in front of Hector. "An' don't sit aroun' here on yuh behin' sniffin' it like dey do at da Waldorf! Jes' toss it off an' getta hell outa here!" He

gave me a reproachful look. "I'm surprised at you, Mister Ogelthorpe, encouragin' bar-flies like dis—you, who never strike up an acquaintance wid anybody. Can't yuh tell by da white bags under his peepers dat he's a lousy lush?"

I looked at Hector's eyes. They were sad and gentle, like a water-spaniel's. "Give me another beer," I told Benny stiffly.

But Benny didn't move. He was watching Hector who was passing the beaker of cognac back and forth under his long pointed nose, critically inhaling its bouquet; his nostrils twitched nervously like a rabbit's. Then he craned his neck to read the check Benny had tossed down in front of me. His piercing blue eyes fixed themselves on Benny's red face. "For that price this should be your *superior* cognac," he said indignantly.

"Mr. Ogelthorpe!" screeched Benny, "I'm tryin' hard to control myself! But it sure ain't easy!"

Hector's thin shoulders hunched up sharply, and then settled down with an asthmatic sigh. He downed the cognac, blinked, and gave a hacking cough. He gave Benny a reproachful, watery stare. "Watered down and blended with DDT."

"Dat did it!" yelled Benny. He slammed his two fists down on the bar. "Now I'm tossin' yuh ouda here on yer fanny!"

Hector folded his hands on the bar and stared intently at Benny; his lips moved soundlessly. Definitely off his rocker, I said to myself. Poor devil! I was lifting my beer mug to drain the last drop, when it happened. I dropped the stein and it crashed to pieces on the floor. I grabbed for the edge of the bar to keep from falling off the stool. "Good Lord!" I gasped. My skin was a mass of icy goose-pimples, and my hair was standing up stiffly on my scalp.

Benny wasn't standing there glowering anymore!

There was a faint, wet splashing sound from behind the bar, so I leaned over numbly and looked down. A small gold-fish was fluttering around pathetically on the floor. "Wh-where's Benny?" I stuttered.

Hector was sprawled on his stomach across the bar, gazing down with chagrin at the flopping gold-fish. He turned tear-filled eyes to me. "I just can't get my sorcery to work

right," he said in a plaintive voice. "I really did intend to change him into a pelican—and now look what happened!"

He dropped down behind the bar, filled a pretzel bowl with water and, picking up the gold-fish by the tail, dropped it in. "No use letting Benny kick the bucket."

I got down mechanically off the stool. I didn't even bother with my change or my gold cigarette lighter. I just wanted to get outside and start running hard.

Hector suddenly lifted his head from a steady, bright-eyed contemplation of the fish whirling furiously around the glass bowl, and asked quietly: "Where do you think you're going, Mr. Ogelthorpe?"

"G-g-gotta get h-home!" I yammered. "Late for s-s-supper! Wife will b-b-be sore!"

"You stick around a while," he said softly, and put his chin back on his fists and gazed raptly at the demented gold-fish. "You haven't seen anything yet."

I got back on the stool and sat there, staring. Impulsively Hector patted my shoulder. "Don't you worry none, pal, I wouldn't play any tricks on you."

"Thanks, thanks a lot," I mumbled.

The double doors of the bar crashed in, and a blowzy redhead wearing a dyed-rabbit coat charged in. "Where's Benny? she yowled. "That jerk was s'posed to phone me!"

Hector grinned and pointed to the frantically spinning gold-fish. "Here's Benny—having a swim."

She moved fast, cornered Hector behind the bar and brought her heavy purse down on his head with a resounding thump. It squashed in his natty Tyrolese hat and made his face contort unhappily. "Now, jes' wot in hell are you doin' behin' my boyfriend's bar, huh?"

That look of mysticism was creeping into Hector's crockery-blue eyes; his lips began to form silent, outlandish words.

My fingernails were cutting into the palms of my hands, and I tried to yell to the big carrot-top. "Beat it, sister, beat it—*quick!*" But only little impotent gusts of air hissed through my clenched teeth.

She grabbed Hector by the throat and pulled back a strong right to bop him on the nose . . .

This time I saw the entire

eerie show. It was nerve-shattering—sufficient to send a man stark raving mad. The red-head's misshapen body seemed to balloon almost to the bursting point, and then abruptly started to deflate. Then there were angry sizzling sounds, like fat frying on a hot griddle; the shape began to fold in upon itself like a lump of melting tallow. A geyser of yellow steam puffed up like a small atomic cloud, and right before my eyes—

A pelican took shape!

I started teetering off the stool, but Hector reached across the bar and steadied me.

"I'm still a step behind," he said aggrievedly. "I meant to change the trollop into a zither." He came around and opened the doors, and the pelican waddled out into the night.

Then he slid a bottle of Benny's most expensive French cognac down the bar to me and climbed onto a stool alongside. "I think we should drink a little toast to good old Benny."

So it was "Mud in your eye!" and *"Saluti!"* and *"A votre santé!"* and *"Prosit!"* and *"Ding hao!* and *"Skoal!"* to the gold-fish who had stopped on the side of the glass bowl facing us. The eyes were bulging enormously, the fins whirling like propellors, and the mouth gulping spasmodically. It was Hector, alright!

"And we should drink a few for his girl-friend," interrupted Hector.

"Don't you think we're taking too much liberty with Benny's best cognac?" I asked.

"Perhaps you're right." He slid off the stool, "You wait here, I'll be right back." He bustled out into the street.

I sat there sipping the cognac and looking at Benny in the pretzel bowl. And he looked back at me, steadily, murderously. His mouth kept pouting out as if he had a spastic seizure, and, although I'm not a lip-reader, I knew what he was hollering: "I'll get you two rats for dis, jes' wait'n'see!"

It must have been about twenty minutes later when I heard the sound of tramping feet outside. The doors of the bar were kicked violently inward, and Hector strutted through leading an army of human derelicts. They were the combings from river-banks, hobo-jungles, from beneath bridges, out of flop-houses and charity-wards.

"Luh-awft!" yelled Hector. "Fahwhrrrd, hahnnnh!" In they trooped more than thirty, each erect and grinning and proudly keeping step. He ordered them around, up and down, back and forth. "Ahnn, hopp, reep . . . reep, faw, y'lofftt!" Then he gave them some physical drill. "Fall forward! Get hurrupp! skin-heads! Flop backwards! Get hurrup!" He duck-walked them twice around the room. It was all a very smart performance, indeed.

Finally, he dismissed them, and they came over and shook my hand and said they'd be delighted to drink with us—as long as we wanted them. One acted as barman, and the bottles and glasses were lined up. Poor Benny was whirling like a gold disc in the bowl trying to keep track of the free drinks.

"I used to be a leatherneck," said Hector. "Campaigned with the Old Sixth Corps in North China."

Then the six-foot-four army sergeant, with the blonde on his arm, came through the door. He stood just inside, staring dumbly and scratching his head. He looked like Samson, about to pull down the pillars of the temple.

"Come on in and drink up!" Hector called to him. "The drinks are on the house!"

The sergeant moved down to us. He was walking on the balls of his feet, and I knew that punching a bag and waltzing around a ring could only have given him the ominous smooth tread with which he approached us.

He tapped Hector on the shoulder. "What's goin' on here? I'm Benny's brother Herbie."

"Benny's indisposed," replied Hector, measuring the man-mountain with bright, shrewd eyes. "He put me in charge."

Herbie looked around the crowded, smoke-filled room; his jaw squared and his black brows came together in a hurricane warning. "You call dis takin' charge? Dere ain't a thin dime in dis whole gang of winoes."

"St. Patrick's Day is always open-house," said Hector.

The blonde was slipping an arm around Hector's neck. "I think you're cute," she drawled.

Herbie practically lifted her off her feet and carried her down to an empty booth.

Hector glared after the sergeant. "Can you imagine a knuckle-headed dog-face having a hot babe like that?" He made a megaphone of his hand and sang to the tune of *Bless 'em all:*

"Oh, we asked for the army
to come to Tulgai,
But Douglas MacArthur
said 'No'! . . ."

I gripped warningly Hector's arm. "Hey, listen, Hector, pipe down! He'll mop the floor with us!"

"He gave as his reason,
This isn't the season . . ."

The blonde had dropped a coin into the juke-box and music blared out, but Hector's voice triumphed over the din:

"Besides, there is no U.S.O.!"

Herbie was suddenly behind us, and he was scowling. "How 'bout knockin' the racket off, Gizmo? My girlfriend, Miss La Salle, wants to lissun to Elvis Presley." He cracked his knuckles. "An' I happen to have bin wid Douglas at Biak, for your information."

Hector was now singing loudly and movingly:

"From the Halls of
Montezuma . . ."

Herbie's two hams were reaching under Hector's armpits. "I think you an' me wanna take a little walk outside, huh?"

I started to unbutton my jacket for freer action. *Esprit de corps!* I had been at Iwo Jima.

"To the shores of Tripoli . . ."

Then, as Herbie jerked him violently off the stool, I saw *the look* concentrating in Hector's eyes.

Bedlam broke loose in the club.

I stared open-mouthed. Herbie had disappeared, but a kangaroo with boxing gloves on its front paws was bouncing all around the room throwing punches at the bums who were scrambling wildly for the exits. "Look at him go!" exclaimed Hector. "And he's just what I wanted him to be!"

In the distance I heard a siren whine. "I think someone has called the cops," I announced worriedly. "We'd better get out of here."

"Not until I've tried a mass demonstration of wizardry!" Hector shouted. He fixed his eyes on the panicked riff-raff.

The remarkable metamorphosis took place just as a patrol-car slid to a stop outside. As we were hustling out the back door into the alley, I looked back. What a menagerie! There was an anteater, a kinkajou, a badger, a jackal, an ibex, a screaming puma, two marmosets, a gnu, a tapir—and a sleek, tawny cat. Four orangoutangs, newly arrived, and the kangaroo were now driving them into a corner.

"How about Benny?" I asked Hector.

The gold-fish was making the water boil with his frantic gyrations.

"Oh, he'll be okay," Hector assured me. "I left a note to feed him regularly and change the water."

Hector walked as if in a trance down the alley, his face radiant. "Not a fluke in the lot of them," he said happily. "I'm really a first-class wizard!"

The sky was becoming faintly pearly in the east when we came out the end of the alley into the street. Hector was yawning and running his hands wearily over his face. "Well, it's been quite a night in Benny's Bar, eh, Ogie?"

"Simply amazing, Heckie!"

The cat had escaped from the bar and was following us down the alley. Now it rubbed against Hector's legs, purring loudly. He studied the feline with growing interest.

"Well," I said, "I guess I'd better get home and make peace wtih the little woman."

"Want me to come along and help you explain things to your wife?"

"Oh, no, Heckie, I'll handle it okay."

"Just as you say," he murmured drowsily.

I started off. "Well, so long, Heckie, see you 'round."

"Hey, Ogie, look!"

I turned around. Then I fell back a few steps, pressing palms over my unbelieving eyes. The prowling cat had disappeared and in its place was the enchantingly formed Miss La Salle, one slender arm draped around Hector's neck, the other trying to hide her matchless nudity! As I discreetly looked away, I heard her say huskily: "I'm cold, cutey-pie."

After a couple of seconds, Hector called to me: "Okay, Ogie, you can look now!"

The blonde had on his linen jacket, but her slender legs, just below the thighs, were bare, and she kept lifting one foot, then the other, and rubbing it against each perfectly

rounded calf. "Let's go, Sweetie," she insisted.

"I've sure got my mystic powers under control now!" chortled Hector. He gave me a neat two-fingered salute. "Well, *adios* again, Ogie. Too bad you have to go home."

A black cat was rubbing around my legs. "Oh, I dunno," I thought aloud. "A few more hours won't matter too much—now." I pointed to the friendly, mewing cat.

"No, no, you'd better get on home," advised Hector. "I know how ornery a wife can get." He was staring dreamily, reminiscently beyond me.

I sighed heavily and started walking away. *"Aloha,* Heckie." I nodded politely to the blonde. "And I hope I'll see a little more of you sometime, too, Miss La Salle."

"Could be," she said thrillingly, "Could be."

At the corner I stopped and watched them walking in the graying dawn down the street. She reminded me of Marilyn Monroe walking away on a movie screen. I felt incredibly lonesome and forsaken.

Then I said "Damn!" and turned around and started for home. An equestrian, astride a chestnut mare, passed me near the park. The horse neighed and the rider stared open-mouthed. He kept looking after me, until I turned the corner. Hell, I thought, drunks staggering home in the early morning hours should certainly be no uncommon sight.

My mouth tasted metallic, so I stopped at a gum-vending machine for a mint-chew. But, first, I studied my face in the mirror. *Holy mackerel!* what a shocking reflection! The worst hangover I had ever had. I decided it would be very unwise to go home in this condition.

I set off for the riding-stable down at the end of the park. When I trotted into the barn, the horses whinnied derisively at me; some kicked out angrily. Mean cayuses! But I evaded their lashing hooves and got into an empty stall. There I pondered my predicament. Emily was high-strung and subject to fainting spells. She'd be sure to throw a fit when she got one look at me.

Well, what would you do if the doorbell rang early one morning and you opened the door to someone who brayed: "Hello, darling, I'm back!"

Especially if you were a dejected-looking Missouri jackass wearing a checkered sports-jacket and a Panama hat.

THE END

ABE LINCOLN—ANDROID

By O. H. LESLIE

Come to this strange party—where George Washington will open the door—where Abraham Lincoln will take your hat and Carrie Nation will hand you a drink.

CONGRATULATIONS! I am pleased to inform you that you have just made a purchase which will reward you with priceless qualities of service and satisfaction. Your Handmaster Home-Robot has been designed and engineered to perform every domestic duty with thoroughness and dedication to detail, and given proper attention will remain a loyal and efficient servant for generations to come.

MODEL NO. H230957
QUALITY: Class A-1, Series 48
TYPE: Abraham Lincoln

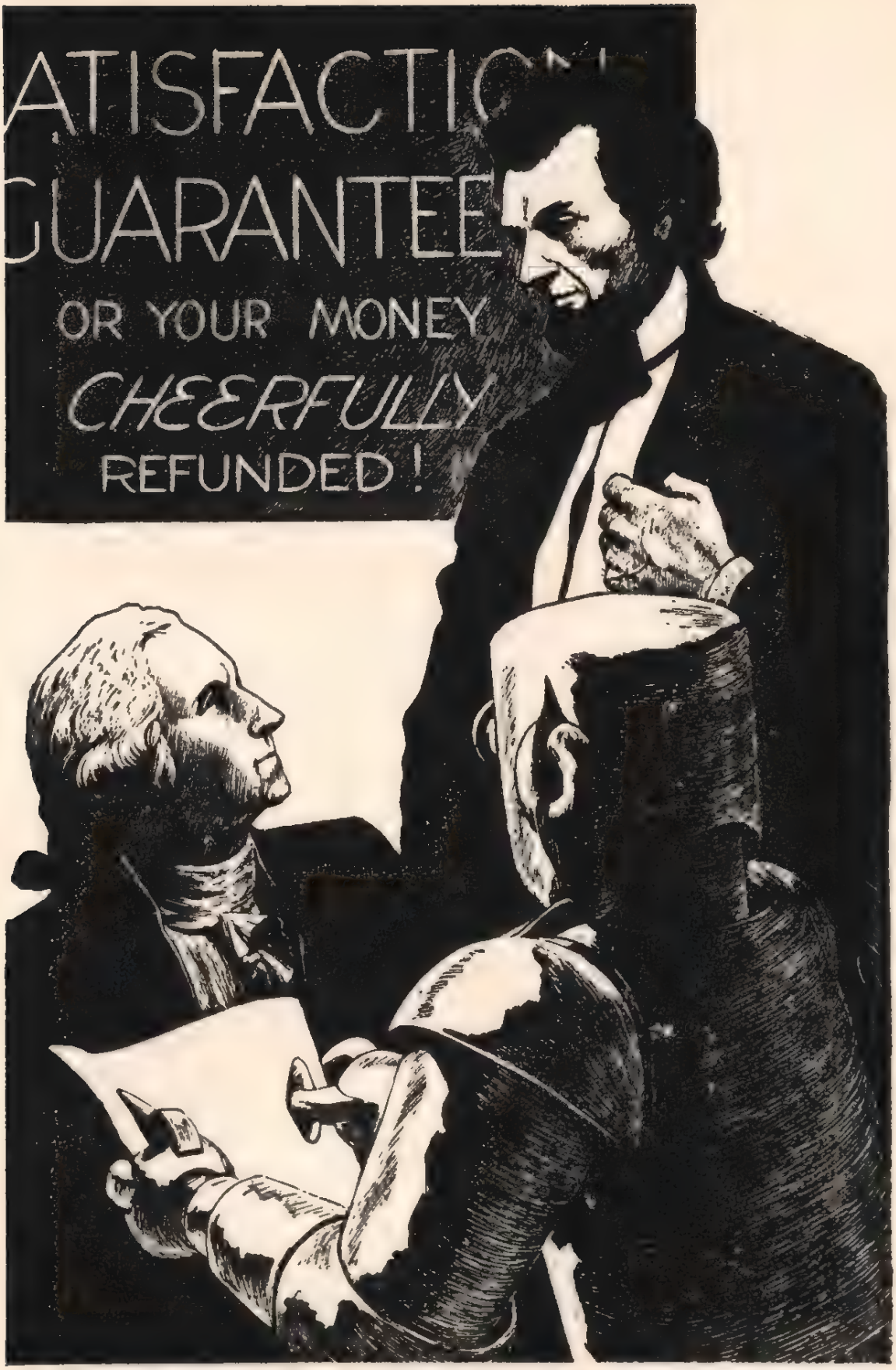
The representatives of the American Historical Society arose from their chairs, shook hands gravely with Justin Mark, and played Alphonse and Gaston at the door of the lawyer's office.

Justin looked after them, amused yet impressed by their pointed dignity. Nevertheless, he didn't neglect the one caution he took with all new clients.

"Miss Lyons," he spoke into the Soundbox. His secretary came in, electric with efficiency. "Have this check verified," he said to her. "Then get me Murray Lawrence on the phone. That's all."

Murray was cheerful, loud, and boisterous on the phone, and threw out three invitations to lunch before Justin could tell him the reason for his call.

"Murray," he said finally, "I want you to do me something. How well do you know



Were these robots an insult to the memories of great men?

the Valeras'? . . . You do? Fine. Here's the thing—I want you to wrangle me an invitation to one of their parties . . . No, business. New client. I'll explain later . . . Yes, I'll dress formal. Anything for money. Okay, swell . . . See you tomorrow."

By this time, Justin's secretary had returned with the check, and of course, the signatures had been found to be genuine. The lawyer sat back comfortably, perhaps even smugly, in his green leather chair, and looked at the crisp yellow strip of paper with the crisp $10,000 written across its face. It was a large retainer, even for Justin Mark. His first five-figure fee had been for the defense of a college president (facing a paternity suit)—and now, for the prosecution of a prominent robot manufacturer, on the charges of libel.

"I don't know if I can make it stick," he told Murray at lunch the next day. I haven't made any sort of an investigation yet, of course, but from what the men from the Historical Society told me, it looks like a rocky couple of months for Mrs. Mark's brightest child."

Murray, talking between mouthfuls of steaming bouillon, said: "Depend on me, anyway. Got the invitation to the Valeras' next soiree. You'll get an eyeful of these libelous robots there."

"Have you seen them?"

"Sure. It's a sight, boy." Murray stopped eating, happy for the opportunity for a little dramatics. "You walk up the front steps. You ring the bell. The door opens—wham! The butler's Woodrow Wilson! You walk inside and step over to the bar. Wham—Abe Lincoln hands you a cocktail! The maid comes in to announce dinner. Wham! It's Carrie Nation!"

"Eat," said Justin. "I got all that from the Society. What I'm really interested in is how close the resemblance is, and what, if anything, I can do about it."

"How about suit from the descendants?" asked Murray, now returned to his meal.

"Several of the descendant families are in on the deal. They came to the Society first, and the AHS has agreed to pool the families' resources and their own. They've put the whole thing in my lap."

"But is it really *libel?*" asked the lawyer's friend.

"That's the question," said Justin glumly. "There's no precedent for this sort of thing. It would be different

if these Handmaster Robots were made up in the likenesses of living people, but there's no such case I've ever heard about. I should have stuck to criminal law. When's that party?" he asked suddenly.

"Wednesday night. I've already told Valera that I was bringing you. He thinks it's a fine idea."

"Deeply grateful," said Justin soberly. "How's the soup?"

But Wednesday afternoon, Justin's plans for the evening changed quickly.

His secretary came in and informed the lawyer that Brigham Handmaster, president of the Handmaster Robot Corporation, and the object of Justin's intent study for the past week, had called personally and asked that Justin attend a small gathering at the Handmaster home.

When he had been left alone with the news, Justin fought down a naive but insistent feeling of awe—an awe inspired by fifteen years of legend. To the people who knew him only by that legend, Brigham Handmaster walked the earth with seven-league boots, was omnipotent, immortal, and spoke often and confidently to God. More had been written, spoken, and televised about Handmaster than any other figure of his time, and the Handmaster apocrypha could fill a five-foot shelf. It was whispered that the President of the United States, along with many other major world personalities, was a Handmaster robot; it was rumored that Handmaster had swung national elections by creating thousands of robots who voted at the polls the way Handmaster directed. There were many more tales of terror concerning him—most of them palpable fantasies—but each served to increase the stature, the fame, the notoriety of the robot manufacturer.

Handmaster, it was said, was curiously disinterested in these fables—even in the one which began . . . "Once upon a time, a robot was created named Brigham Handmaster . . ."

It was quite a colossus that had called Justin—personally—and invited him to tea. The awe was justifiable, but after this first reaction, Justin thought seriously about the call. He decided that there could be only one reason for the invitation: Handmaster knew about Justin and the Historical Society.

"Return Mr. Handmaster's call," said the lawyer into the Soundbox. "Invitation accepted."

The robot that took Justin Mark's coat was an early, standard model, sweet-faced and placid. Like all Handmaster products, it was actually an android, a creation of synthetic tissue, but the public had never accepted the odd word and Handmaster's sales department had bowed to their preference for the term "robot." He introduced himself quietly as John, and led him through a majestic hallway to the main room of the Handmaster home.

It was a striking room, but Justin, prepared to be dazzled, was rather surprised to find it not so unlike the rooms he had seen in the homes of other wealthy men.

Justin counted seven people in the room, but he knew that Handmaster wouldn't be among them, that the manufacturer would wait until all his guests were assembled before making his entrance.

As he stepped through the doorway, Felix Huston, Handmaster's personal physician, came up to him and shook his hand.

"We are so glad you could come, Mr. Mark," said the doctor after the unnecessary introduction. "Mr. Handmaster will be here shortly. Come in and let me introduce you to some people."

The doctor was a friendly man, rosy-cheeked and white-haired, the pluperfect model of the Herr Doktor from his polished brogans to the soft tweeds and briar pipe. But Justin warmed to him, and felt more at ease. He led the lawyer to the center of the room, where two huge lounges faced each other. Three men stood between the couches, one sat besides two women, and he too arose as Justin approached.

"Mr. Maxwell," said the doctor as Justin began the round of handshaking. "Mr. Sewell, Mr. Richardson, and —Mr. Hoenig. And the ladies—"

Justin turned to the couch where the women sat.

"Mrs. Handmaster, Miss Angel Handmaster—Mr. Justin Mark, the eminent attorney."

Everyone smiled and nodded politely, and a robot came over with a martini on a tray, which Justin took. He took a seat on the lounge opposite the women, his face giving no hint of the appraisal he was making of the seven people about him. But

the legal mind was at work, classifying:

Maxwell, Sewell, and Richardson were obviously business associates of the Handmaster Corporation; they looked prosperous, well-fed, and their low-toned conversation was salted with sales and production statistics. Hoenig was a small dormouse of a man, with beady eyes behind large lenses. Weak-eyed, with a tired stoop, Justin judged that he was possibly one of the Handmaster scientists.

About Angel Handmaster, the lawyer at least had some outside information, for much had been written about this charming young girl, Handmaster's daughter by adoption. She wasn't more than eighteen or nineteen; pretty, bright-eyed, and managing to look femininely shy despite her long years beneath the spotlight of Handmaster publicity.

But the legal mind ran into difficulty when it focused on Joanna Handmaster, the manufacturer's wife, and the neat little white index cards in Justin's brain came tumbling down like the Alice in Wonderland deck. And all the classification that Justin could make was:

". . . the most beautiful woman I've ever seen—beyond a doubt."

The conversation began in small talk, and showed no sign of shifting into higher gear. The doctor spoke mildly of the theatre; the three businessmen, after flirting with Justin's interest in sports, continued to talk among themselves; the little man sat quietly huddled in his seat, wrapped around his martini and his apologetic air.

The comments from Angel were brief and intelligent, but Mrs. Handmaster's only contributions to the talk were several brilliant smiles—and Justin felt well satisfied.

The robot John came in.

"Mr. Handmaster," he announced.

Everyone stood up, but Justin didn't wait for their signal. He was on his feet, bringing the empty glass with him. He stooped to put it down on a table, and was surprised to find that he was swaying dizzily.

He looked up again, and saw the tall familiar figure walking slowly towards them, taking measured strides that seemed to lengthen the room as he came closer. He was slim and athletically built, his leonine head was framed by a mass of white ringlets, his

eyes were dark and deep-set, and his mouth was curved in a smile of sad amusement, and Justin—

—fainted.

When he opened his eyes, Justin saw Handmaster sitting on the edge of the bed where he lay stretched.

"I'm sure you'll be fine now," said Handmaster's rich baritone. "Dr. Huston, who knows a great deal more about such things than I do, said you might have been overcome by excitement. However, you seem a reasonably calm young man, and I would be satisfied with a diagnosis of an overheated room, and the overheating whiskey. Can you talk?"

"Yes," said Justin, in a small voice.

"I am glad you could come."

Justin's answer was a croaked: "Thank you."

"And in a way, I'm grateful to your susceptibility to —whiskey. I wanted to talk to you alone. That would have been impossible downstairs."

The room came into full focus now, and the lawyer could see that it was nothing less than the Handmaster bedroom, and that the exquisitely comfortable bed was Handmaster's own. Justin suddenly became conscious that his shoes were on the bed, and he swung his feet to the floor and sat up.

"You were surprised, of course, when I called you for this engagement. You were probably even a little flattered." Justin looked up sharply. "Please don't take offense," said Handmaster smoothly. "You are quite an important person, really. You didn't need my invitation as a guarantee of that. However—" and the smile disappeared like the sun behind a cloud, and the handsome face darkened, "however there is only one matter upon which you and I could find a common ground of interest. And that is the suit which you are preparing against me for the American Historical Society."

"How did you know?" said Justin, his voice still weak.

The smile returned. Handmaster re-seated himself in a chair across from the lawyer, his long body relaxing into it with unconscious majesty. "There's a saying," the robot manufacturer said, the smile a softly playing line, "that if a man in an attic reviles the name of Handmaster, in two minutes Handmaster will be raising the roof."

"Omniscience?" answered Justin, trying to put a sneer into his voice.

"So the people would like to believe."

"*Like* to believe?"

"Of course. To believe that Handmaster was truly omniscient, truly omnipotent, and truly—" he looked upwards with mock reverence—"talked with God. But before we become amateur philosophers, Mr. Mark, let me end with this: the greatest word in the language of the people is Father. And in the beginning, that, too, was the word."

Handmaster stood up in an attitude of finality.

"Now, Mr. Mark, I shall ask you to discontinue the suit you are preparing against the Corporation as a personal favor. If you refuse, I will offer you a greater sum than that offered by the American Historical Society. If you still persist, I will offer you with all sincerity, a high position with my own legal staff, on whatever basis you desire."

"Choice of one please?" said Justin, with a pale attempt at humor.

"—And if you still refuse, I may even threaten your life."

With that, Handmaster turned and left the bedroom, and from that moment Justin was left in the hands of the sweet-faced robot, who returned his hat and coat and guided the lawyer to his waiting 'copter.

On the flight home, Justin detected an odd taste in his mouth, and wondered if there had been something else in his drink besides gin and vermouth.

"I want another favor from you, Murray," said Justin over the desk, "and it's going to cost you twenty-five thousand dollars."

Lawrence refused to be startled. "So?"

"That's the cost of the exclusive Handmaster Model H. That's the model your friend Valera made so famous."

"I don't understand lawyers," said Murray. "They all play the same game, but keep changing the rules. What kind of robot would you like? Maybe Blackstone? Let's have it."

"Maybe Terrence McKay."

"For the love of Helen! Justin, you're impossible! I thought I'd hear you out, but this tears it. Now why," he said, pushing a long finger into Justin's chest, "do you want a robot to look like a ham television actor?"

"Terrence McKay is the

highest-paid TV star in America," said the lawyer.

"He's a lousy actor."

"He's the idol of millions."

"Damn it!" Lawrence stood up. "Unless I quit playing the part of Watson, I leave this show on the road. What the deuce are you talking about?"

"Sit down," said the lawyer, "and I'll explain. Whatever your opinion of his thespian ability, Terrence McKay is undoubtedly the most popular figure of the screen. There isn't a more familiar face in America. Agreed?" Murray nodded. "Then here's the point. I've built up a little brief against the Handmaster Corporation, but it's so puny that I'm sure it couldn't stand on its own two feet in a court of law. But it's something else again if I can produce a robot in court that's a spitting image of a living human being—especially the unmistakeable image of Terrence McKay. Then I get Mr. McKay to do the suing, and put a law on the books that says *no* manufacturer may produce *any* robot with *any* resemblance to *any* human being, living or dead. Get it?"

"A noble thought, but hopeless, Justin, hopeless. Even if you got Terrence McKay to sue Handmaster, where would you get the robot?"

The lawyer looked wise. "I'm handling McKay's second divorce. I had lunch with him the other day and told him about the robot. He was incensed, to say the least. He'll sue."

"But the robot doesn't exist!"

"That's where you come in," said Justin. "You're going to buy it from the Handmaster Corporation, but directly from an untrustworthy but influential underling named Albert Yoder. He'll see that a Terrence McKay robot is made and delivered to your office—five thousand dollars over ceiling price. And Murray—Mr. Yoder will want that extra five thousand in cash. I'm sure you understand."

In three weeks, two deliveries were made simultaneously from the Handmaster Robot Corporation.

One was made to the prominent realtor, Murray Lawrence, and was delivered in person by a slit-eyed, nervous little man with an unruly moustache. It was a robot, the exclusive Handmaster Model H, list price: $10,000. Lawrence wrote a personal check for that amount while

Albert Yoder stood by his chair, anxiously wiping his hands on his trousers. Murray blew on his signature, withdrew a fat envelope from a drawer, and handed both to the waiting man. Then he turned to look, with a wonderment and awe he never quite recovered from, at what seemed to be the famous television star, Terrence McKay, but was actually an unthinking, unfeeling machine of manufactured flesh, bone, and brain.

The second delivery was a letter, on the personal stationery of Brigham Handmaster, and it was addressed to Justin Mark, counselor-at-law. It read:

"Will you discontinue the suit which you are preparing against the Handmaster Robot Corporation, as a personal favor to yours,

Brigham Handmaster."

Terrence McKay threw a towel on his dressing table and whirled to face Justin in a much too dramatic gesture.

"There are some things you don't know," the actor said coldly. "One is the fact that the Handmaster family are dear personal friends of mine."

Justin could see his own face in the mirror, and was able to watch it register dismay. What a fool I am, he thought bitterly. I might have known that.

"Secondly, I don't believe that a word you're saying is true. I don't think there is any such robot, and if there is, the resemblance is only slight and accidental."

"Very well, then," said the lawyer, trying to rally his forces after this unexpected attack. "Suppose I put it this way. If there were such a robot, and it was a dead-ringer for you, and it was made with the express intention of duplicating your own body—would you sue?"

The actor stepped to the television monitor set into the right wall of his dressing room, flipped a switch, and watched a re-run of a scene from the newest McKay production. He smiled affectionately at the screen, enjoying the close-ups. Satisfied, he shut off the set, came back to his dressing table and started to remove his robe.

"I should be very dismayed if such a robot existed," he said. "But I really can't believe it."

"Okay," said Justin, lifting his hat from the table. "We'll see about it later."

In the doorway, he turned

once more to McKay. "By the way," he said lightly, "I understand your robot does the laundry."

There were several messages on Justin's desk when he returned, three of them from Lawrence. And dropped casually on the blotter was another letter from the office of the Handmaster Corporation.

He picked up Murray's messages first. They were all pleas for a return phone call. He asked his secretary to get the number, and soon the phonescreen glowed yellow. But it was Terrence McKay on the image.

"What the hell?" said Justin.

Then Murray appeared. "It's your damned robot," he explained. "I want to talk to you about it, Justin. I've been threatened."

"You what?"

"Well, not out in the open. A Handmaster representative called me yesterday and offered to buy him—I mean it—back. Claimed that there was an error in manufacture, and that the robot wasn't 'serviceable.' They found out, Justin," he concluded nervously.

"I expected they might find out. Yoder's out of work."

"That 'serviceable' business," said his friend, and Justin could see that he was sweating. "That could be a threat in disguise, Justin."

The lawyer bit his lip, then remembered not to look worried. "All right. I'll draw up a notice of purchase this afternoon. I'm buying your Terrence McKay robot from you. I'll call for my property this afternoon."

Murray looked relieved, and with a brave attempt at humor put his arm around the robot. "How much of a mark-up?" he cracked. But he was still sweating.

The letter read:

"I offer you my personal check for twenty-five thousand dollars, if you will discontinue the suit you are now preparing against yours,
Brigham Handmaster."

The doorman was a cinch, but the real test of whether Justin could get away with the experiment was the desk clerk. He was a lanky, sleepy-looking man, but with a lot of questions behind his heavy-lidded eyes. As Justin and the robot approached the desk, he said:

"Mr. McKay! But I thought—"

Justin interrupted hurriedly. "I'm Franklin, Mr. McKay's doctor. He had a bad attack of laryngitis at the studio, so I brought him home."

Corny, thought Justin, but the only way. Alfred Yoder hadn't bothered to duplicate McKay's famous voice in the Model H.

"I see," said the clerk solicitously. "Do you need any help?"

The lawyer smiled. "I'm afraid I do. Mr. McKay forgot his keys when he left the studio."

"Well . . ." the clerk looked at the robot uncertainly. "I guess it's all right. I have a passkey." He reached beneath the desk for it, and came out to join them. "Follow me, please."

Upstairs, the clerk let them into the McKay apartment, fussed around a bit, deprecated Justin's offer of a dollar tip, and left.

When he had gone, Justin seated the robot on a plush hallway sofa and gave it instructions.

"Now get this straight, Terrence. When your counterpart comes through that door, I want you to say: 'How do you do? I'm Terrence McKay.' If that doesn't startle him—" Justin stopped, realizing that he might as well confide in the bookcase.

He left the robot sitting motionless in the hall, and went into the kitchen. There was a turkey sandwich in the cold unit, and he ate it with great enjoyment, downing a tin of beer. Then Justin came back and looked for a suitable hiding place for the moment when the real Terrence McKay would come through the door. What a mystery I'm making of this, he thought to himself. Murray was right. Trouble with me is, I think I'm Sherlock Holmes.

He went to the robot and straightened its pocket handkerchief. He was about to adjust its polka-dotted bow tie when he heard the click of a turning latch.

Justin looked around wildly. Damn! he thought. With a bound, he headed for the hallway closet. Luckily, it was spacious, and not jammed with damp overcoats. The door was thin enough to permit sounds to come through clearly. And the first sound that Justin heard was a light footstep, then the closing of a door, and then—a woman's voice.

"You told me you were going out of town," the voice

said. It was a young, sweet voice, but its tone was harsh and accusing.

"Don't think I came to spy on you, because I didn't," she said. "I came to get something. My compact. I left it here Friday."

There was a silence.

Then—

"Oh, Terry!" The voice rose to a higher pitch. "Why must you act this way? Don't you see what you're doing to us—to all of us? If you only knew! *Don't just stare at me!"* Her voice dropped to a low tone, but it still skirted the edges of hysteria. "I know I'm making a fool of myself. But I don't care, do you see? I just don't!" She gasped. "I can't stand this anymore!"

Then she was pleading—

"It's the only thing you can do. Terry, darling, you must see that. Leave her alone. She's no good for you. Maybe I'm not good for you either, but leave *her* alone!"

Then the voice cracked, and the sobs came.

"This could mean the end of everything, Terry—everything! Terry! Don't just stare! TERRY!"

After that, the silence was like a heavy weight, pressing against the closet door. Justin's breathing became heavy, and hearing it, the lawyer held his breath and listened again.

There were two explosions!

Stunned, Justin fumbled clumsily with the doorknob, finally wrenched his way out of the closet. The door to the apartment was opened wide. He ran through it, out into the lobby, but it was empty, the elevator already descending.

The lawyer walked slowly back into the room. Seated rigidly on the sofa, its manufactured flesh and bone shattered beyond recognition by the blast of a pistol, was the robot.

As Justin came through the doorway, a flat voice from somewhere beyond the pulpy mass said:

"How do you do? I'm Terrence McKay."

Justin rounded the corner and entered a drug store. He went into the visiphone booth and dialed Murray's number. His friend appeared on the screen, a napkin tied ludicrously around his neck. In spite of himself, Justin laughed.

"What is it?" said Murray.

"Another favor," said Justin. "Go to 12 Terrace Row, Apartment 18-B. You'll find your—I mean *my* robot

there. It's shot to hell, so you can have it at half price."

"What happened?"

"Figure it out for yourself when you get there. Murray—"

"What?"

"I'm not joking about this. Be sure to get there this afternoon and get rid of the robot. Now get off the phone so I can call my office."

"Miss Lyons," Justin said when the sharp features of his secretary appeared on the screen, "I won't be into the office at all this afternoon. Send any important calls to my apartment."

"There was one message, Mr. Mark. From Mr. Handmaster."

Justin rolled his tongue back. "A letter?" he asked carefully.

"No, sir. It was a telephone message. Mr. Handmaster asked if you could come over to his home. As soon as possible. He said it was urgent, Mr. Mark.

It was the same robot butler who came to the door as Justin entered the Handmaster home for the second time.

"Please come in, Mr. Mark," he said. "My master is expecting you."

Justin walked past him, but turned when he saw that the robot was not following at his heels. Instead, it stood stiffly in the doorway, still smiling at nothing, and Justin was alarmed to hear him say:

"Please come in, Mr. Mark. Please come in, Mr. Mark. Please come in Mr. Mark."

Then the robot shut the door, turned and met Justin's eyes, broadened its smile and began to follow him. Justin was unnerved by this uncharacteristic performance, but managed to collect himself. He walked into the main room, and this time it was Handmaster who arose unsteadily to greet him. There was no formality.

"I'm very glad you could come," he said. "It's very important to me." His voice and manner were calm. Again, Justin felt the presence of the robot near his back. He turned, shocked, for the robot had placed one hand on Justin's arm.

"Please come in, Mr. Mark," said the robot again, repeating the speech in the same gentle voice. "Please come in, Mr. Mark."

The robot's grip tightened on Justin's arm, and the lawyer realized that he would have to battle the robot for his release. "Mr. Handmaster," he said, trying to keep

his voice level, "there's something wrong. He—"

"John!" Handmaster yelled at his butler. Instantly, Justin's arm was freed. The robot stood stiffly at attention. The manufacturer went up to it, peering into the placid eyes.

Justin felt his scalp prickle as he looked on, for great, oily tears seemed to be coming from the soft blue eyes of the robot, running down the smooth-planed cheeks and over the smiling lips.

"Good Lord!" said the lawyer. "Can robots *cry?* Do they have feelings?"

"In a way," said Handmaster sadly. He put his hands on the robot's shoulders, and looked at him with an emotion that might have been affection.

"John is one of our early models," the manufacturer said. "The early Series had a tendency towards—mental imbalance. But John has always been—all right." He put his hand on the robot's neck. "Have you ever seen a robot turned off, Mr. Mark?"

"How do you mean?"

"Not killed, you know," Handmaster said softly. "Turned off. Stopped. For good, unless the Factory sees fit to reactivate it. But even then, they're not the same. Just—spare parts."

His hand moved up the neck of the robot.

"There's a button here, a flesh-colored button, just behind the right ear. You'd hardly know it was there. It's well concealed."

Justin said: "Are you going to—"

The manufacturer dropped his arms. "No. Not now. We'll see about that some other time. John has been with me for many years. He gives me the feeling of a loyal and devoted servant, a faithful servant. I enjoy that feeling Mr. Mark."

He sent the robot out of the room with a word. John went silently, but in another minute he was back, bringing Angel Handmaster into the room.

"Come in my dear," he said to her. "Mr. Mark is here."

The girl came towards us, walking in a trance-like state.

"You remember Mr. Mark, don't you?"

Angel looked vacantly at Justin.

"He's going to help us. Aren't you Mr. Mark?" Handmaster's strong gaze was compelling.

Justin stared back. "Of course. If this is something

I can help you with. But I'm afraid it's not too clear."

"You've handled problems of this sort before," Handmaster continued, "before you took divorce cases and so forth. Handle this problem for me, Mr. Mark, and you can consider your libel suit settled without court action. This is more important to me."

The manufacturer took his daughter gently by the shoulders and eased her into a chair by the cold fireplace. Her eyes were still expressionless, even when her father said: "Tell Mr. Mark what you've done, Angel."

Angel looked at the floor.

"I've killed someone," she said.

Her voice was dull and unexcited, but Justin recognized it now, and knew what was coming.

"I've killed Terrence McKay," she went on. "In his apartment, this morning."

"Why?" said Justin tightly.

"I was in love with him. And he was—unfaithful."

Justin looked up as he heard the angry noise Handmaster suddenly made in his throat. "A lack of fidelity seems to be a Handmaster family problem, Mr. Mark," he said bitterly. "I'm sure you know about my first wife. The Sunday horror-gravure has told her story often enough."

Justin searched his mind hurriedly for that twelve-year-old story, but all he could recall was something about the first Mrs. Handmaster's lover, whose flourishing business had been wrecked by Handmaster's clever and ruthless tactics following the divorce. The lover had shot himself. A messy business.

"I made my first wife a Jonah for every man she met after her betrayal," said Handmaster. "In my younger days, revenge was my favorite pastime, Mr. Mark." The manufacturer lit a lean cigar.

Angel began to cry, but instead of comforting her, Handmaster went to a cabinet and opened a drawer. He returned with a pistol in his hand. "This is the gun my daughter used," he said to Justin. "It's a family heirloom, you might say." He handed it to Justin, who took it gingerly. "It's killed more than one thoughtless lover," said Handmaster, and Justin knew it was the weapon that had brought death to his first wife's luckless *amour*.

"Will you handle this problem for me, Mr. Mark?"

Justin cleared his throat. "Well, I think there's something I ought to tell you first—"

Handmaster stopped him. "Before you do, I want you to know that the situation is far from hopeless. I can provide you quite a suitable scapegoat, if necessary. When Angel returned home with her unhappy tidings, I sent some competent employees to the McKay apartment, and they did not return alone."

"What do you mean?"

"They discovered a man in the act of removing the body. They have brought him here, so that we may ascertain his purpose, and whether he might have suitable motive for committing the crime. Or perhaps, to see if we could *provide* that motive."

Justin shot to his feet. "What man?" he said.

"His name is Lawrence, and he has something to do with real estate. I thought I would get your expert legal opinion before we made our next move."

"My expert legal opinion is for you to release him right away," said Justin angrily. "He had nothing to do with it. And as for your daughter, she can thank her good fairy that I beat her to Terrence McKay's apartment this morning!"

Handmaster was obviously shaken by his words, and his nervous fingers let the long ash of his cigar drop to the rug. "What are you saying?"

"Your daughter destroyed twenty-five thousand dollars worth of robot, Mr. Handmaster. So far, that's her only crime."

Angel's tears stopped, and she sat up stiffly, her face a pretty picture of surprise.

"So you can let Murray Lawrence go right now," Justin continued, "and you can stop worrying about Terrence McKay. He's in sickening good health. And since there's no murder case, I guess we're back to our old standing on the libel suit. As a matter of fact," he finished wryly, "you can thank your daughter's impetuousity for helping you win it. She's ruined the best piece of evidence I had."

The lawyer started for the doorway, embittered at the turn of events, but somehow relieved to have seen Handmaster humbled before him.

On his way out, he almost collided with the incredibly beautiful woman who was Handmaster's wife. But her

classic features were strangely distorted, her creamy complexion mottled by the crimson of uncontrolled anger. She swept past Justin, and to his amazement, threw herself in a rage at her adopted daughter.

"You fiend! You filthy, rotten tramp!" she screamed.

Her long red fingernails clawed at the young girl, who cried out in horror. Handmaster stumbled backwards in bewilderment.

Justin rushed back into the room and tried to separate the two women, but the strength of Mrs. Handmaster was doubled by the vigor or her anger. By now, her fingers had encircled Angel's throat, and Justin found himself helpless to stop them from throttling the life from the young girl's body.

"Handmaster!" he shouted. "Help me! She's killing her!"

The robot manufacturer stood frozen. Then, with a great effort, he leaped to Justin's side. They managed to pry the fingers from the slim white throat, but not to hold the frenzied woman. She tore from their grasp, and reached out for the gun that Justin had returned to the table near Angel's chair.

"Joanna!" Handmaster's crackling cry was terrifying. Justin grabbed for her arm, but he was too late. She fired, wildly, shattering a precious voice atop the mantelpiece. Angel shrieked, and made a break for the doorway.

"You killed him!" Joanna Handmaster screamed after her. "You killed the only man I've ever loved!"

She fired after the girl before Justin could reach her again, but her aim was poor. Angel fell sobbing to the floor, but she was unhurt.

"Joanna, please!" Handmaster pleaded. His wife whirled to face him, the gun still a deadly power in her hand. "You can't do this—you don't understand—"

Justin saw the strange new light that entered the woman's eyes as she faced her husband. But he didn't quite understand its significance until she said:

"My lord and master!"

She laughed, harshly.

Handmaster took a hesitant step forward, as if to meet the bullet she fired at his chest.

Handmaster's fall was slow and awkward.

He lifted one arm as he went down, and clutched at the table, overturning it.

"Fidelity," he said, as Jus-

tin stooped to help him, "was always . . . a family problem."

Justin looked up from the blood-stained shirtfront. Handmaster's wife had put down the gun, and had sat heavily in the chair before the fireplace. Her body had gone limp and lifeless, the angry fire banked and dying.

"Angel!" snapped Justin. "Call an ambulance. Right now!"

He turned to the robot manufacturer again. The light was dimming in his eyes, but labored breaths still came from his mouth. He was trying to say something, but the words were unformed, muted.

"What is it?" said Justin, bending closer.

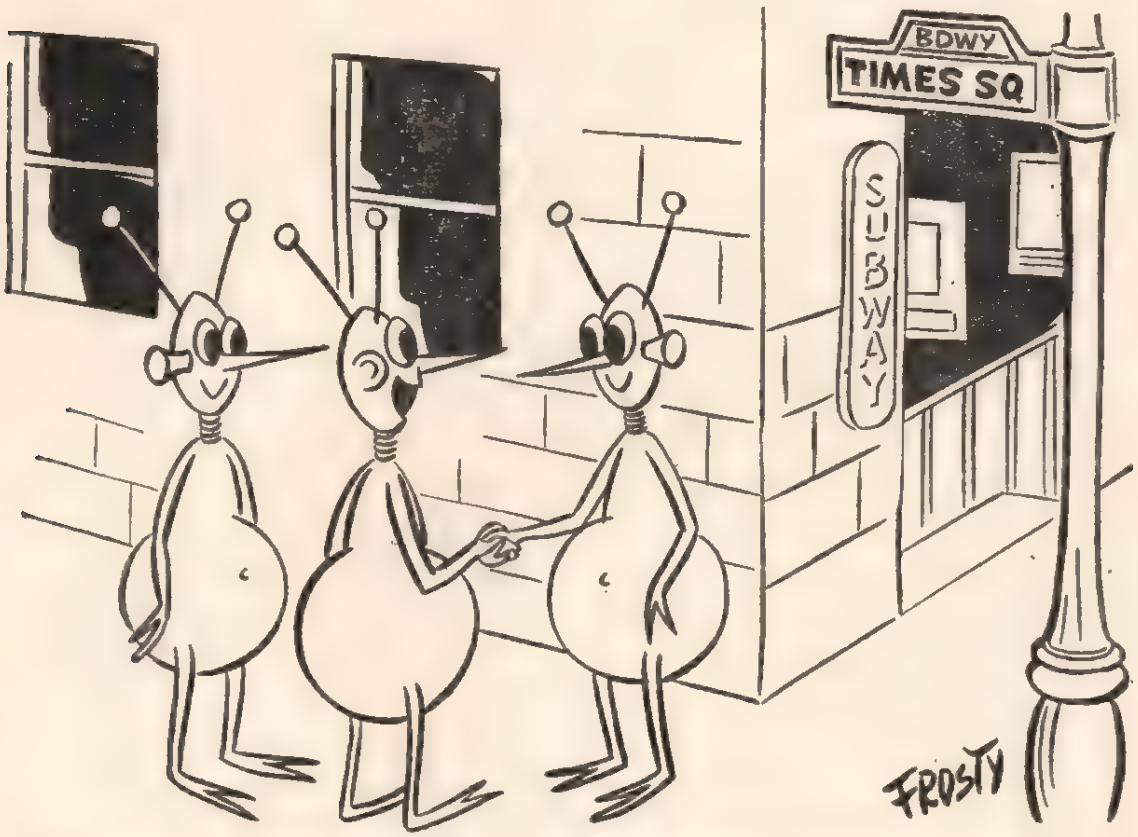
The speech came out in a harsh whisper.

"Turn her off," Handmaster was saying.

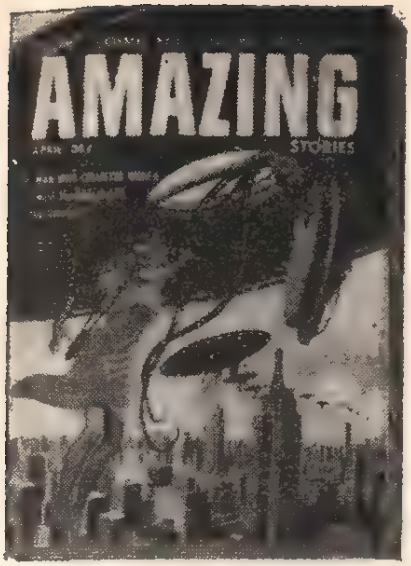
"What?" Justin put his ear to the moving lips.

"Turn her off!"

Handmaster raised his arm in a supreme effort, and pointed to the back of his right ear. It was the last thing he did. **THE END**



"They said if we stood here long enough we'd meet a friend."



THE DAY THE WOMEN VANISHED!

A strange man from outer space arrived on Earth and then disappeared. He took thousands of helpless women with him, made slaves of them, and promised to strike again soon! No female felt safe—but how could the kidnapper be caught?

You'll enjoy reading the awesome tale of "The Man Who Collected Women" . . . featured in April **AMAZING STORIES.** It's typical of the unusual stories which make **AMAZING** the world's leading science-fiction magazine.

Buy your copy of April AMAZING STORIES
Now on sale at all newsstands—only 35¢

BOTTLE BABY

By HENRY SLESAR

There's this guy named Wormstocker, see—and about women he knows nothing whatever. Then along comes this dream chick, fresh from a beauty contest in outer space somewhere, and chirps, "Hey, buster—what's with this pastime called sex you've got down here on Earth?" Wormstocker gulps, "Well—," and the chick says, "Show me—don't tell me." That was how it all started.

WHEN Mortimer Wormstocker, Ph.D., walked into the laboratory he knew that it was going to be a rewarding day. Sunlight was streaming through the windows of the Chisolm Drug Company, the white mice and guinea pigs were squealing contentedly in their cages, the retorts were bubbling merrily. It was a day for Science and Progress, and there was a smile of anticipatory pleasure on Mortimer's pleasant, scholarly face.

He wasn't much to look at in street clothes. His brown suit was serviceable, if somewhat shabby, but it hung limply on his thin shoulders. The long lines of his face, with its highset eyebrows, gave him the look of a surprised horse. His hair was either brown or gray, depending on the light.

But when he exchanged his mufti for the cool white smock of the laboratory, Mortimer was transformed. He *still* wasn't much to look at, but at least you knew he was a man of dedicated science.

He set to work quickly, checking the condition of the fluids which had been simmering in the Bunsen Burners overnight. He clucked at every notation he made, sometimes with satisfaction, more often with displeasure. He became so absorbed in his study, that the entrance of his pretty, red-headed lab assistant went unnoticed.

Cherry Cooper wasn't surprised. Her exits and entrances had gone unnoticed

It was the weirdest end-run in history.

by Mortimer for almost three years. Other men thought she made a magnificent entrance, and also approved her exits. But somehow, the shape that launched a thousand street-corner whistles never seemed to disturb Mortimer Wormstocker, Ph.D.

"Has anything happened?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing much, Miss Cooper. The antibodies have failed to appear in any of the experiments. Some good results with the Collodian filter, but that's not too important."

"That's too bad. Anything I can do now?"

"Nothing special. You might clean up here while I prepare the new batch of virus. Unless you have something more important."

"Well, Mr. Chisolm *does* want that report, Dr. Wormstocker. If you could spare the time."

Mortimer blinked at her. "Report? What report? I haven't time for reports, Miss Cooper."

"Mr. Chisolm's getting pretty nasty about it. He hasn't had word from you about the cold serum in three months."

But Mortimer wasn't listening. He never listened when the conversation concerned P. G. Chisolm, president of the drug company. All Chisolm cared about was the dividend on Chisolm stock, on the promotion of some new 12-way cold tablet or cough medicine or some such patent item. He never could appreciate Mortimer's views on pure research.

"Well, Doctor?"

"Well, what, Miss Cooper?"

"What shall I tell Mr. Chisolm?"

Mortimer whirled on her angrily, almost bumping into her forecastle. It was an opportunity most men wouldn't have missed. "You can tell Chisolm to—to jump in the lake!" Mortimer gasped at his own daring, but stuck out his chin to prove he meant it.

Cherry smiled like an indulgent parent. "I'll write him a memo and say you're working on it. All right?"

"Fine. Just fine."

She made a characteristically interesting exit, and Mortimer went back to work.

He was idylically happy. Even the failure of the night's experiments didn't spoil the radiant mood with which he had begun the day. Research was all Mortimer lived for; in this case, research of the virus which produced that elusive and an-

noying affliction, the common cold. It wasn't the first time he'd been engaged in such study. He'd spent four years with the Common Cold Research Unit at Salisbury, England, experimenting with rabbits, mice, voles, squirrels, chickens, pigs, baboons, and college students. He had learned a great deal about the reaction of the cold virus, but had discovered no cure. He hoped to perform that miracle in a Chisolm Company test tube.

There were only two thorns in Mortimer's bony side at the moment. One was P. G. Chisolm, the company president—but thanks to Cherry Cooper's adroit blocking, Mr. Chisolm could be handled.

The other was Hugo Holmeyer.

Holmeyer! The very name was an imprecation. At its mention, Mortimer's gentle face went black and scowling. Say it twice, and his gray-brown hair would begin to bristle like the back of an angry boar.

It was hard to believe that Hugo and Mortimer had once been classmates, sharing each other's textbooks, carving up cadavers side-by-side, sitting around for hours in smoky fraternity houses, arguing about the germ theory. It had looked as if a lifelong friendship had been formed, even after graduation.

Then Mortimer's article had been published.

It was an innocuous little article, about cow-pox. It had been printed in an obscure bacteriological journal with a circulation of less than twelve hundred. Unfortunately, one of the subscribers was Hugo Holmeyer. More unfortunately, Mortimer's article made reference to a series of experiments which he described as "unsatisfactory, unscientific, and a bit foolhardy." Later, when Mortimer received the bitter telephone call all the way from New York to the Chisolm Laboratory in Ohio, he protested that he never realized just *who* had conducted the experiments.

It was Hugo Holmeyer, of course. End of one friendship.

But it was worse than that. The slur rankled in Hugo's now large (250 pounds) body. He published a virulent counter-attack, calling Mortimer an "unschooled pill-maker." Mortimer countered with a short, fiery article proving Hugo's experiments wrong point-by-

point. Hugo answered with an enraged letter. Mortimer replied with an insulting telegram. Hugo retaliated by taking the next plane to Ohio and punching Mortimer in the eye. Mortimer swung his left and missed. Hugo hit him again and stalked out.

Then there had been several months of uneasy truce. But when Mortimer's appointment as Chief Research Chemist for the Chisolm Company was announced, Hugo held a press conference. He made the statement that the Chisolm Company, under Mortimer's inept guidance, would never find the cure for the common cold.

Now it was a year later, and Hugo Holmeyer's prediction still held true.

But Mortimer wasn't discouraged. His enthusiasm and faith was still evident this morning, as he got set to remove his filtered cold virus to the vacuum pump.

When he was ready, he called for Cherry.

"Yes, Doctor?"

"All set," he said cheerfully. "Prepare the DPI pump."

She set up the device with swift, expert fingers. When the job was completed, she came up to the table and put her hands behind her back.

"Dr. Wormstocker . . ."

"Yes, Miss Cooper?"

"Were you planning to go anywhere this evening?"

"This is Thursday, isn't it? You know I never go anywhere on week nights."

"Well, I was wondering if you'd care to come to my apartment this evening, for dinner. I sort of hoped you'd help me with my biology."

"Your biology?"

She blushed. "The course I'm taking in night school."

"Well," Mortimer frowned.

"Oh, I'm sure you'd enjoy it, Doctor."

"I'm afraid I'm not much of an instructor—"

"Well, you know what they say. A good teacher always learns something from his pupils."

"Learns what?"

"Why not come up and see?" Then Cherry got business-like. "You think it over. I'll leave you to your experiment."

She exited, and this time Mortimer's eyes followed. He had the uneasy feeling that there had been a sexual implication in her conversation, and Mortimer wasn't on the best terms with sex. In his almost forty years, he had had a few brief skirmishes, mostly with horn-rimmed

bedroom enthusiasts who were well past the age of consent. He knew that it was an interesting phenomenon, (indispensable, biologically) but he could never quite cope with its complications.

He shrugged, and started the mercury vapor pump that would clear the air from the flask on the laboratory table.

He watched the process, suddenly feeling drowsy. Mortimer had read the Bacteriological Journal until well past one P.M. the night before, and his eyelids were heavy. He yawned, and pulled up a laboratory stool, sitting down with his elbows resting on the tabletop.

The flask was becoming cloudy, but he hardly noticed it. Then it became cloudier still, but his eyes were almost shut.

Finally, he started to doze off.

Rap! Rap! Rap!

He opened his eyes quickly and looked at the door.

Rap! Rap! Rap!

"Who is it?" Mortimer said. No answer came.

He frowned and stood up, looking around the room. He looked at the ceiling and then at the floor. He looked under the table and into the closets.

Rap! Rap! Rap!

The annoying sound persisted, but he couldn't find its source. He went to the window and peered out, but his view of the street yielded nothing.

He shrugged and came back to the flask.

Then he saw her.

"Ha-ha-ha!" she laughed, throwing back her lovely head. "I'm right under your nose!"

She was telling the exact truth. She was right under M o r t i m e r Wormstocker's nose, and Mortimer's nose was directly above the container. Because the laughing girl was less than a foot high, and she was standing smack in the middle of the airless flask.

A man of less scientific mind might have fainted at this shock to his sense of reality. All Mortimer did was stare, and the more he stared, the more incredible the sight became.

The creature in the glass was not merely tiny: she was a perfect miniature of the most stunning, eye-filling showgirl that ever closed a show in Boston. And there wasn't any question of her charms; they were clearly exposed behind the clear glass of the container. Long limbs

and high, rounded breasts, a sinuously curved body, beautifully turned arms and legs, flowing canary-yellow hair. The way she posed, with her hands on her hips, her chin tilted, her red mouth laughing, Mortimer could tell that she was proud of her brazen nudity.

"Well?" she said. "Say something!"

Mortimer swallowed the cannonball that was lodged in his throat. Then he made a bleating noise.

She cocked her head. "That's funny. Can't understand *that* word at all. Wonder if my Language shot is working?"

"Who are you?" Mortimer croaked.

"*That's* better. I understood that perfectly."

"Who are you? How'd you get in there?"

"Help me out and I'll tell you." She laughed again. "Don't be shy. Just reach in and take me out."

Mortimer closed his eyes and muttered a short prayer. He took the stopper out of the flask, destroying his vacuum, and timidly put his right hand near the top of the receptacle.

"Well, come *on!*"

"I can't!"

"You can, too. I don't weigh very much."

He shut his eyes even tighter and lowered his hand inside. When he touched her cool white skin, he gasped as if ice water had been flung in his face. She took hold of his fingers and curled them around her torso. Mortimer flushed all the way to his fingernails, and lifted her out gently.

She stood on the lab table, almost doubled over with laughter.

"You're funny!" she said. "Afraid to even *touch* me. Why, where *I* come from, men touch me all the time."

"Where *do* you come from?"

"O1-84. You wouldn't know it, of course. It's a galaxy you probably never heard of."

"But how'd you get into my flask?"

"It's all part of my prize. The judges arranged it so that I would appear in a vacuum on your planet, to prevent me from landing in either fire or water. You can understand *that.*"

"Of course," Mortimer bulped. "But what prize?"

"The Miss 01 prize, of course. It's a beauty pageant we hold every year. The winner gets a free two-week va-

cation to any planet in the cosmos."

"And you won?"

"That's right. And I chose Earth because I've heard the men are so *different* down here. Is it true? Are you really different?"

Mortimer blinked rapidly. "Well, I'm a lot bigger, if that's what you mean."

"Oh, I can be your size, too. For a couple of hours, anyway—it's sort of a strain."

"But how did they get you here? And how could you breathe in a vacuum?"

"Breathe? Oh, you mean oxygen. We don't have to breathe for days, if we don't want to. Do you breathe all the time?"

"All the time," Mortimer said hollowly.

"How tiring," the girl said, throwing out her tiny, voluptuous chest and yawning. "My name's Lolionomonillionolli. What's yours?"

"Mortimer. M o r t i m e r Wormstocker." Some of his scientific detachment was returning. "This is really amazing. Extraordinary! You must tell me everything. How did you get here?"

"Oh, it wasn't difficult. The bigdomes have all sorts of things on 01-84. Something to do with a quadridimensional warp. It'll wear off in two weeks, and I'll go back. But the fuss I had to go through! All those shots and things—"

"What kind of shots?"

"Oh, you know. Anti-infection shots, anti-boredom shots, Language shots, stuff like that."

Mortimer licked his lips. "Listen, Miss Loli—Lol—"

"Just call me Lolly." She giggled, and appraised him with frank interest. "You know, you're sort of cute, Mortimer."

"I am?"

"Oh, definitely. I think I'm going to like it here. Especially if you make it—interesting."

"Interesting?"

"Oh, *you* know." She wriggled her naked little body in a gesture that was self-explanatory. Mortimer blushed again, and she came closer to him. "Put me on the floor," she said.

"What?"

"Go on, put me on the floor. I want to show you something."

Mortimer couldn't imagine what was left to show, but he put out his hand timidly and closed it around her soft little waist. When he lowered her to the floor of the laboratory, she looked up at him and said:

"How tall are you?"

"Five-feet-ten."

"Then five-feet-four would be perfect, wouldn't it?"

"Huh?"

"Never mind," Lolly said, and hugged her arms around her body. A subtle transformation took place in her tiny figure, and for a moment, Mortimer thought she was beginning to glow luminescently. Then he stepped back, and realized that the transformation was no longer subtle. Lolly was definitely changing, upwards, outwards, and sideways.

She was getting bigger!

At first, he regarded the process with intent, scientific interest. Then the realization of her ever-increasing nudity struck him.

"Don't!" he shouted. "Not here!"

But it was too late to stop her progress. He put both hands over his eyes.

When he peeked out from between his fingers, Lolly was a lovely, shapely, indisputably naked five-feet-four. Hard to believe—and how!

"There!" she said, with a satisfied grin. "That's much better, isn't it?"

"Much," Mortimer murmured, backing away from her. "But you really must get some clothes—"

"Why? Don't you like me this way?"

"Yes. I mean no! Girls just don't *do* that here—"

"Don't do what?" She moved towards him.

"Go around without any clothes." He ducked behind an Erlenmeyer flask. "You'd get arrested. We have laws."

"We have laws, too," Lolly said slyly. She cornered him at the guinea pig cages. "Natural laws."

"Please!"

It was one of those moments in Mortimer's life when he both welcomed and feared interruption. Unfortunately, this interruption came in the person of a short, ferocious little man named P. G. Chisolm. When Mortimer saw him in the doorway, he yelped audibly and tried to crawl in with the guinea pigs.

"Dr. *Worm*stocker!" Chisolm's voice was a blast of pure indignation. "Really! *Really!*"

"Oh, oh," Lolly giggled, and hugged herself.

She was gone!

Mortimer and Chisolm stared at each other across the space vacated by the girl. Almost in unison, their jaws dropped.

"Where'd she go?" Chis-

olm said hoarsely. "Where is she?"

Mortimer started to answer, but he felt something tugging at his pants leg. He looked down, and realized that Lolly had restored herself to her original tiny size, and was hiding behind his trousers. He interpreted the tug as a warning to keep silent.

"Where's who?" he said.

"You know damn well who! That—that woman who was in here! That naked woman!"

Mortimer's innocent expression would have drawn admiration from Barrymore. "Naked woman, Mr. Chisolm?"

"Yes, naked woman!" The president's bald scalp was crimsoning. "You know damn well you had a naked woman in here just a second ago. Now what did you do with her?"

"But Mr. Chisolm—where could I hide a naked woman?"

"How should I know? But I saw her! Don't tell me I didn't! Now I know how you've been wasting your time all these months. Pure research, huh? Haven't even got time to write a lousy progress report! Too busy! I'll *bet* you were busy, Wormstocker!"

"You're being unreasonable," Mortimer said calmly. "Just because of a common hallucination—"

"Hallucination? A naked woman in my laboratory? I saw it with my own eyes, Wormstocker!"

Mortimer studied him musingly. "Must be optica dementia erotica," he said. "Fairly common ailment. Overwork, probably."

"What?"

"Oh, don't be upset, Mr. Chisolm. Just spend a little time in bed. That's all you have to do."

Chisolm stared back, somewhat shaken. "Are you telling me I *didn't* see a naked woman?"

"Only in your imagination," Mortimer said cheerfully. "But you'll be fine in a few days."

"I *have* been working hard," Chisolm admitted. Then he scowled again. "But she *was* here!"

"Oh? Then where is she now?"

Chisolm withdrew his handkerchief and began mopping his forehead. "Not here," he muttered. "Not here, all right. I could have sworn — Dr. Wormstocker! Are you sure about this optica

dementia erotica? Are you sure it's not serious?"

"No, no, my good man," Mortimer laughed. "Get right home to bed and you'll be as good as new in a week."

"Yes," Chisolm said, turning to the door in a dream-like daze. "Yes, I'll do that. Right away . . ."

When he was gone, Mortimer's aplomb vanished. When Lolly came in sight again, he spoke to her angrily.

"Don't ever do that again! You almost cost me my job!"

"I'm terribly sorry, Mortimer." But the grin on her face was mischievous. "But I really couldn't help it, could I?"

"I've got to get you out of here before there's more trouble. I'll have to take you home—"

"Goody!"

"But how? I can't just put you in my pocket—"

"Sounds like fun."

He snapped his fingers. "I know! The traveling cage!"

"The what?"

"The traveling cage. We use it to transport mice and other laboratory animals. It has plenty of ventilation, but I don't suppose that matters to you."

"I don't care how we get home," Lolly cooed, rubbing her hip against his pants leg. "As long as we get there . . ."

"Stop that!"

Mortimer strode over to the supply locker and lifted out a cage. It was about sixteen inches long, and a foot deep. He opened the small wire door and examined the interior. It was a trifle gamey, so he cleaned it out with an alcohol swab and placed it on the floor. Lolly looked at it, blew Mortimer a kiss, and stepped inside.

He shut the little door with a sigh of relief.

When he left the laboratory, he saw Cherry Cooper outside.

"Going to lunch so soon?" she said.

"No," Mortimer answered. "Going home. Don't feel too well today."

"Oh, that's too bad. Then I don't suppose you can make it for dinner tonight?"

"Some other time, perhaps. Feel rather ill."

"Must be an epidemic," Cherry smiled. "Mr. Chisolm went home, too. Said something about dementia erotic, something like that."

"Yes," Mortimer said. Inside the cage, Lolly giggled heartily.

"What was that?"

"Just one of the mice. I—

I'm taking her home. For research purposes."

Lolly giggled again, and Mortimer bolted for the elevators. She continued to titter all the way to the ground, and the elevator man looked at Mortimer suspiciously.

When the taxi finally drew up before the brownstone rooming house on Oklahoma Avenue, Mortimer tossed more than enough money into the lap of the driver. When he went up to his solitary room on the second floor, he couldn't resist the impulse to tiptoe.

He closed the door behind him gratefully.

Inside the cage, Lolly's tiny voice said: "Is this it?"

"Yes. But you'll have to be *very* quiet. This is a respectable boarding house, and if they knew you were here I'd be out in no time."

She giggled, and there was an abandon in the sound that Mortimer didn't like. He bent down to release the catch of the door, and when the beauty-contest winner came out, there was a noticeable stagger in her walk.

"Whoopee!" she cried, flinging her arms over her head. "Let's have a ball, Mortimer!"

"Shush! I told you to be quiet!"

"Don't *wanna* be quiet! Wanna have a ball! Wanna sing!"

"Please!" Mortimer said desperately.

But Lolly was already singing, in a wild off-key yodel that set the bric-a-brac trembling on the shelves. Then Mortimer realized his troubles had been compounded. His miniature visitor was drunk.

He stared at her in amazement as she reeled about the floor of the room. Then he remembered the alcohol he'd used to clean out the traveling cage. The fumes must have reached her tiny nervous system.

"You must be quiet!" he whispered hoarsely. "Mrs. Veeber will hear you!"

"Whozzat?"

"My landlady. She's terribly strict!"

"Kiss me!"

"Don't be ridiculous!"

"All right. Then I'll sing!"

"No, no!"

"Then kiss me!"

"I can't! I'd swallow you!"

"Then I'll make myself big—"

"No, you can't! It's bad enough *this* way!"

But Lolly was hugging herself delightedly, and all

Mortimer Wormstocker could do was watch the process do its work. When she was Earth height, he groaned loudly. Because if Lolly had looked nude in the antiseptic surroundings of the laboratory, she was positively indecently naked in the surroundings of his own room. She leered at him with beautiful eyes that he realized were bright pink. Then she put her arms out.

"No!" Mortimer said. "Not again! Not here!"

"You're so funny. They were right on 01-84. Earth men *are* different . . ."

Mortimer couldn't look.

He tripped against the sofa and fell into the pile of cushions. The girl leaned over him, and all was almost lost when the knocking started. At first, Mortimer thought it was the pounding of his heart. Then he realized it was Mrs. Veeber at the door, and his heart almost stopped pounding completely.

"Dr. Wormstocker! What's going on in there?"

"Nothing! Nothing, Mrs. Veeber." His words were half-smothered by Lolly's torso.

"Swear I heard a woman's voice," Mrs. Veeber grumbled. "You better let me in, Dr. Wormstocker."

"No!" Mortimer cried. "I'm not dressed." He was almost telling the truth. Lolly had already stripped him of his suit jacket, and was working on his shirt buttons.

"Well, put somethin' on. I want to look around, Dr. Wormstocker."

"Please!" he hissed in Lolly's ear. "Diminish! Get small! Get lost!"

"Will, if you kiss me," Lilly giggled.

He grabbed her and planted a kiss of sheer expediency on her lovely red mouth. It didn't take him long to start enjoying it, and Mrs. Veeber's protestations outside the door suddenly became far-off, meaningless noises. Then he gasped and pushed the girl away. In another moment, she was out of sight.

He opened the door. Mrs. Veeber looked formidable.

"Yes?"

"Want to look around. Sounded like a woman to me, Dr. Wormstocker. *Drunk* woman."

"Really, Mrs. Veeber! I've been living here for five years. Did I ever bring a woman here?"

"Nope. But there's always a first time." She darted a quick professional look

around the room, and walked inside. She opened just the right doors and looked in just the right corners. The search satisfied her, and she left.

Lolly peeked out from behind a sofa cushion.

"All clear?"

"Yes," Mortimer said grimly. "Now, young lady, we're going to talk about clothes."

"Clothes? Clothes won't do *me* any good, Mortimer. I can only stay *your* size for a little while." She grinned slyly and crooked her finger at him. "But long enough . . ."

"Never mind that. I mean clothes *your* size, the size you are now. You can't go around naked that way. It's not decent!"

"All right," Lolly agreed. "You go get me some clothes, and I'll go back into that little cage of yours. I like it in there. It *smells* good."

"That was the alcohol," Mortimer sniffed. "You should stay away from it. It makes you dizzy."

"I like being dizzy. Where do you get this alcohol?"

"All sorts of places. Bars, mostly."

"What are bars?"

"Never mind. You stay out of that box. I'll go to Glimdales Department Store down the street and see what I can bring back. What's your size?"

"Hm?"

"You know. What size—things do you wear?"

"I don't know. We don't wear clothes on 01-84."

"Well, what are your measurements?" When she shrugged helplessly, he said: "Look, you better make yourself big again. I'll find myself a tape measure."

It was a job making the measurements, and Lolly seemed to enjoy it much more than he. Finally, he jotted them down.

"Thirty-eight, twenty-six, thirty-six. I'll go to the Toy Department and see if they have doll's clothes in this proportion. Good idea, don't you think?"

"*Terribly* clever."

Mortimer smirked. "Simple deduction. Now you wait right here. Shrink back to your normal size and don't make any noise. Understand?"

"Perfectly!"

Mortimer was pleased by his ingenious notion about the doll's clothing as he entered Glimdales Department Store. But when he faced the row of dolls in the Toy Section, it was with an air of helplessness and confusion.

Finally, he attracted the attention of a bored saleswoman, and asked for a doll which would suit Lolly's dimensions. She looked at him wide-eyed for a moment, and then burst into shrieking laughter that turned every shopper's head toward them.

"Please!" Mortimer said. "What's so funny?"

A floorwalker came striding to the counter asking the same question. Between hysterics, she said: "Gentleman here wants a sexy doll."

"Very funny," Mortimer said icily, and stalked off.

When he returned to the rooming house, his head was bowed with a sense of failure. He went slowly up the steps to the second floor, and opened the door cautiously.

"Lolly?" he said softly.

No answer.

"Lolly?" He pushed aside the sofa pillows, and then peered into the empty traveling cage. The alcohol fume almost knocked him down.

"Lolly!" he repeated, now anxiously.

But there wasn't any doubt. After a frantic but thorough search of the small room, it was obvious that the girl from 01-84 was gone.

Mortimer didn't know if he was happy or sad. She was a nuisance, no question about that. She could have gotten him fired that morning, and thrown out of his room that afternoon. She was definitely bent on mischief, and her intentions concerning Mortimer were all too clear.

But there was another side to the matter. She was an alien from deepest space, a scientific marvel, a phenomenon. Her discoverer could well become the most talked-about man of the decade. Could Mortimer allow such an opportunity to escape him? An opportunity that would make his colleagues—including Hugo Holmeyer—turn pitifully, beautifully, green with envy?

If there was any other reason for wanting Lolly back, Hugo dismissed it from this thought. Science was reason enough. He had to find her!

He hurried down the stairs to the parlor floor. Mrs. Veeber, her spinster sister, and two decrepit female boarders were knitting and chatting cozily. Their placid expressions told Mortimer what he wanted to know. They had definitely not seen a little naked woman recently.

He nodded to them courteously and went out the front door.

Outside, he looked up and

down Oklahoma Avenue, feeling the hopelessness of his task. She could be anywhere!

Then he saw the glowing red neon three doors from the brownstone. It said: BAR.

Of course!

It was the first time in Mortimer's life that he had entered such a place. He walked up to the long mahogany counter and addressed the shirtsleeved man who was poking a towel into a thick glass.

"Pardon me," he said.

"Whatllitbe?"

"Hm?"

"I said, what'll it be, Mac?"

"I just wanted to ask you a question."

"Sure. But usually guys have a drink when they're askin' me questions. Whatllitbe?"

"Anything at all," Mortimer said, annoyed at the blackmail. The shirtsleeved man produced a green bottle and filled a small glass to brimming. He placed it under Mortimer's nose, and the scientist looked at it distastefully, shut his eyes, and downed it. It tasted awful.

"Look," he continued, trying to keep the hot liquid from making a return trip. "I'm looking for somebody and I think she might have come in here. But it's going to sound crazy—"

The bartender refilled the glass.

"Must I?" Mortimer said. The man nodded soberly. Mortimer sighed and drank it. "It's a girl, about so high. You couldn't miss her. For one thing, she didn't have any clothes on."

The barman stopped wiping the glass in his hand.

"No, seriously," Mortimer said. "She's about a foot high and stark naked. I think she came in here because she likes the smell of incohol. Alcohol I mean. Urp."

"Okay, buddy."

"She might be anyplace. Maybe right behind you."

The man whirled and looked behind him. When he turned back to his patron, his face was grim.

"Look," Mortimer said, "I'm willing to buy your drinks. But you must help me find her. It's terribly important."

The barman kept his eyes on Mortimer as he filled up the shot glass once more. Mortimer knocked it back and said:

"I had her up in my room but she got away. I went out to buy her doll's clothes, but

I couldn't find her size. They told me they didn't carry sexy dolls." He giggled suddenly, and looked surprised.

"That's all, buddy," the bartender said. He took the glass away.

"If you'll only let me urp around here," Mortimer pleaded. "I'm urp she's here's someplace—"

"Bye-bye," the man said. "Time to go home."

"I can't go home! Not without Lolly." He thrust himself over the counter and began peering behind it. The barman grabbed his shoulder and shoved him back into position.

"Now you cut that out," he said warningly. "Go home like a good little boy."

"I *must* find her! Urp!"

"I said beat it!"

"Lolly!" Mortimer shouted.

"Get outa here!"

"LOLLY!"

That did it. The barman came thundering around the end of the counter and started for Mortimer. He grabbed for his shirt collar and the seat of his pants, in the traditional preparation for bouncing recalcitrant patrons. But Mortimer, fortified by three unfamiliar bolts of alcoholic lightning, and burning with the conviction that Lolly was in the vicinity, didn't make his job easy. Mortimer squirmed out of his grasp, and reached for the first equalizer he could find. It was the whiskey bottle.

Fortunately, he missed, and the bottle crashed on the end of the bar, spraying them both with cheap rye. But the barman was shouting cop, and his cries weren't unheeded. In another minute, Mortimer found four strong arms around him.

Five minutes later, he was looking into the benevolent face of a desk sergeant.

"Drunk and disorderly," the arresting officer yawned. "Lookin' for little naked men, Chief."

"It's a woman!" Mortimer shrieked. "I told you it's a woman. Her name's Lolly—"

"Gee, I'm sorry, Mac," the cop said, tugging his cap. "Woman, Chief. Little naked woman."

"That's better," Mortimer said. "Only you don't really understand. I'm *not* drunk. Never even *had* a drink. Research scientist, for big company. You can call 'em. Go ahead."

The chief nodded, either wisely or sleepily. "What's the name, sir?"

"Mortimer Wormstocker. *Doctor* Wormstocker. If you

will call Mr. P. G. Chisolm, he'll tell you I'm all right."

The chief and the cop exchanged glances. "Okay with me," the desk sergeant said. "I ain't lookin' for more overnight guests. Phone the guy he wants, Finney."

Mortimer said: "You'll have to call him at home; he's not feeling well. The number's ESplanade 9-1040."

But when they located P. G., Mortimer hesitated befor explaining the situation.

"Mr. Chisolm?" he said. "I'm sorry to disturb you—"

"You should be! I'm not a well man, Wormstocker."

"But I'm in trouble, Mr. Chisolm. There was some kind of misunderstanding in my neighborhood, and I seem to be in the police station—"

"The what?"

"The precinct house. I wonder if you'd just tell the officer that I'm all right?"

"Now listen, Wormstocker—"

"*Please,* Mr. Chisolm! Excitement is the worst thing for your condition. Just tell them that I'm your chief chemist, and that you'll vouch for me. Okay?"

"All right," Chisolm grumbled. Mortimer handed the receiver over to the precinct sergeant.

"Okay," the officer said when he hung up. "You can go, Dr. Wormsucker. Only take my advice and stay outa bars. You just ain't the drinking type."

"But about this woman—" Mortimer saw the look in the sergeant's eyes and dropped the subject. "Never mind," he said gloomily. "It's too late, anyhow . . ."

He walked slowly back to the rooming house. Inside the room, he dropped to the sofa and held his aching head. It was hopeless.

Something soft, warm, and round touched the back of his neck.

"Huh?" Mortimer said.

Two hands stole around the back of his head and closed over his eyes. There was a distinct giggle behind him.

"Lolly!"

She leaned over him and almost put his eyes out. "Hello, Mortimer! What took you so long?"

"Stop *leaning* on me! Where have you been?"

"Oh, sunbathing." The full-sized Lolly answered offhandedly. "Up on the roof. It was very pleasant."

"I'm sure it was. Especially for the neighbors. You can't *do* those things on Earth, Lolly. You'll spend the

rest of your vacation in jail!"

That thought reached her. "Oh, dear. That would be terrible, Mortimer. But what can I do about it? Did you get the doll's clothes?"

"No. They just didn't seem to understand. There were plenty of clothes around, but I couldn't figure out what to get."

"I know! I'll go with you to the store! Are they still open?"

"I guess so. They're open until nine on Thursdays. But you *can't* go with me—"

"I'll make myself small, of course. Then you can take me in that nice cage—"

"*After* I wash it out," Mortimer said grimly.

"Then you'll take me?" She clapped her tiny hands with delight.

"Okay. But you better behave yourself."

The Toy Department of Glimdales was still crowded, and Mortimer liked it that way. He skulked past the floorwalker, and edged his way casually to the doll counter, holding the traveling cage firmly with both hands. When he reached the counter, he was glad to see the saleswoman busily engaged in conversation with a stout male customer. He put the box on the floor, and bent down in pretense of tying his shoelace.

"All right," he whispered into the grill of the cage. "The doll's clothing is right behind the counter, in the white boxes. Go through them and pick something. But for heaven's sake, don't let anyone see you!"

He unlatched the door and stood up.

He grinned inanely at the passing customers, rocking on his heels in a sick imitation of nonchalance. In the hubbub of the floor, he knew that Lolly's activity behind the counter would go unnoticed, but he prayed that the saleswoman could stay away.

"Psst!"

He started when he heard the sound.

"Psst, Mortimer!"

He leaned over the counter. Lolly was standing there, draping a tiny blue satin dress over her ample bosom.

"How about this?" she giggled.

"Fine, fine!" Mortimer said anxiously. "Put it on and let's get out of here!"

He turned around again, forcing the smile back to his face. He began sweating freely, and when he heard the saleswoman's voice behind

him, the perspiration turned cold on his forehead.

"How'd *you* get down there?" the woman said. Mortimer turned, just in time to see her reach behind the counter and lift Lolly in her hand. He was about to gasp out a warning when he saw Lolly's slim body, now encased in the doll's dress, go rigid. Thank heavens! Mortimer thought. She was pretending to be a doll!

She placed Lolly on the counter and looked at her admiringly. "Gosh, you're a *real* one! What'll they think of next?" She spotted Mortimer, but didn't seem to recognize him. "May I help you, sir?"

"Er, I guess so. Looking for a doll, for my little girl. This one seems pretty nice."

"It is nice, isn't it? Look. Real hair." She tugged at Lolly's blonde toppiece, and Mortimer closed his eyes and hoped for the best. Fortunately, Lolly went along with the gag.

"Yes, wonderful," Mortimer said. "How much is it?"

"Sorry, sir. It's sold."

"It's *what?*"

"I promised this one to a customer, at the other end of the counter."

"But it *can't* be sold!"

One dummy came alive and started clawing

"I *beg* your pardon," she said haughtily. "Excuse me." She went around the corner and said loudly: "Mr. Brubaker! Mr. *Bru*baker! Over here, please."

A stout, red-faced gentleman answered her call. He looked prosperous, judging from the diamonds that sparkled on his little finger and tie-clip.

"Here's *just* the doll you wanted," she said. "I think your little girl would adore it."

"Well, she's pretty particular," Mr. Brubaker said, paddling his round stomach with his fingers. His jaw dropped when he saw Lolly, standing woodenly on the counter, unblinking, unbreathing. "Say, you're right. Now *that's* what I call an unusual doll! I'll take it."

The saleswoman smiled. "I'll go get my book."

When she was gone, Brubaker looked at Mortimer and winked. "My little girl's twenty-five, but she still likes her dolls. And I like my little girl. If you know what I mean." He winked again, and laughed. Mortimer shifted his feet uncomfortably.

"Gosh," Brubaker said, leaning closer to the girl. "She sure is a *sexy* little doll. You can almost reach out and—"

He put his hand on Lolly's torso and squeezed. Obviously, he enjoyed the sensation, because he continued to explore the contours of the lifelike doll, chuckling concupsciently. Mortimer watched the inspection with growing panic, and when he saw Brubaker's plump fingers near Lolly's lips, he began to shake with dreadful anticipation.

"Ouch!"

Mortimer saw Brubaker's finger at Lolly's red mouth, and Lolly's tiny teeth sunk deep in the skin. The stout man howled again, and Lolly's long leg shot out and clipped him neatly on the second chin.

"Help! Murder!" Brubaker shouted!

"Lolly!" Mortimer cried. He grabbed at the enraged girl and managed to pull her off the stout man. Then he reached for the traveling cage, and shoved her inside. He grabbed the handle and ran.

"Thief!" Brubaker shouted, sucking his finger.

"Thief!" an old lady at the ribbon counter echoed.

"Thief!" the crowd said.

Mortimer was already at the Down escalator when the cries caught up with him. He

saw a counter marked Deliveries and hurried over to the freckle-faced youth in charge.

"Look," he said. "I'll give you ten dollars if you get this package delivered for me. Right away!"

"Yes, *sir!*" the boy answered, taking the cage.

He waited for directions.

Mortimer gave him the address of the rooming house. Then, free of the incriminating cage, he sauntered off to the escalator again.

"There he is!" Brubaker shouted.

"Stop him!" the floorwalker cried.

"Thief!" the saleswoman yelled.

He bolted for the escalator and discovered too late that it was moving upwards. He tried to battle the crowds and the moving stairs, but inexorably, they carried him back into the waiting arms of his pursuers.

"Well!" the desk sergeant said. "If it isn't our old friend Wormsmacker! I thought I told you to stay out of bars?"

"Honest, officer—"

"Never mind the explanations. Complaint says you stole a doll from Glimdales Department Store."

"I didn't steal it! It belonged to me!"

"Incorrigible," the sergeant said sadly. "Put him in Number Five until the morning. We'll let the judge figure out this screwball."

"You can't do that to me! I've got a job! An important job—"

"Yeah, we know all about it. I'm slappin' a two-hundred-dollar bail on you, Wormsticker."

"But I don't have that much with me!"

"Then be our guest. Okay, Finney."

"Please! Just let me call my boss again!"

The sergeant sighed. "All right. One phone call."

P. G. Chisolm took a long time getting to the telephone. And when he did, his voice didn't sound encouraging.

"Mr. Chisolm? This is Mortimer again. Listen, Mr. Chisolm—"

"Wormstocker! Do *you* know what time it is?"

"About ten, I guess. But listen, Mr. Chisolm, I seem to be in another jam—"

"Not the police again?"

"I'm afraid so."

There was a pause. "Wormstocker—"

"Yes, Mr. Chisolm?"

"You're fired."

"What's that?"

"Fired," Chisolm said pleasantly. "F-I-R-E-D. Is that clear? I've had enough of you, Wormstocker."

"But Mr. Chisolm—the research isn't completed!"

"Doesn't bother me at all. I don't think you'll *ever* find a cure for the cold, Wormstocker. I should have listened to that fellow in New York. What's his name, Holmeyer."

"Holmeyer?" M o r t i m e r shouted.

"Yes, Holmeyer! He said you were a phoney. Now I know he was right! Good-bye, Wormstocker!"

Mr. Chisolm! Wait—"

Minutes later, Mortimer was sitting disconsolately on a wafer-thin mattress in cell number five. He was understandably depressed at the events of the day, but the final blow had been the mention of Hugo Holmeyer's hated name.

Holmeyer! How he'd gloat over the announcement of Mortimer's discharge! Mortimer couldn't bear the mental image of his fat face wreathed in a smug smile. He punched out the air, and almost smashed his knuckles against the prison wall.

But why should he get so upset over a lousy cold cure? When he had a discovery of far greater importance—right in his own apartment? A visitor from another galaxy!

If Hugo only knew about *that!* Mortimer chuckled at the idea. It was worth a trip to New York, just to display his find. Wouldn't Hugo's fat lips drool, his beady eyes narrow with envy, his gross body quiver with frustration? Yes, he must show Hugo.

It was a delightful speculation. There was only one thing wrong with it. Hugo was in New York, and Mortimer was in an Ohio jail.

But half an hour later, rescue came, in the person of Officer Finney.

"Okay, pal," he said. "Let's go."

"Go where?"

"Wherever you want. Your bail's been paid."

"What? Who paid it?"

"Lady," Finney shrugged, and unlocked the door.

Mortimer came out hesitantly, expecting to see Lolly's sensational figure at the sergeant's desk. But he was wrong. It was a sensational figure, all right, but it belonged to Cherry Cooper.

"Mortimer!" she cried, running at him and throwing her arms around his thin

shoulders. "Are you all right?"

"Miss Cooper! How'd you know I was here?"

"I called you at home, but you weren't there. I *knew* you never went out on week nights, so I got worried and called Mr. Chisolm. He said something about your being in jail."

"The first time or the second time?"

"What?"

"Never mind," Mortimer said. "Thanks a lot, Miss Cooper. It's all just a terrible misunderstanding."

"Are you sure you're all right? Maybe I'd better come home with you."

"That won't be necessary. As a matter of fact, I'm leaving town tonight."

"Leaving town? But you can't, Mortimer. I mean, you're only out on bail."

"Oh, I'll be back tomorrow. But I have to take the night plane to New York."

"New York?"

"Yes. Do you know any good hotels around Sutton Place? Have to see an old friend who lives there."

"Well, there's the Sutton Park. But what's so important?"

"I have something to show him," Mortimer said grimly. "Something *very* important."

The DC-7 bumped onto the landing strip at LaGuardia Airport, and for the tenth time in the last three hours, Mortimer Wormstocker wondered if his baggage was all right.

Lolly had been remarkably acquiescent about the proposed trip. She had crawled into the traveling cage with a pleased giggle. He knew that she would get careful handling by the airline, but what worried him more was her sense of mischief.

However, the trip had been free of incident so far. He picked up his cage at the baggage counter and hailed a taxi outside the terminal. He gave the driver the address of the Sutton Park Hotel.

Inside the hotel room, his first act was to free Lolly from her tiny prison. He was about to compliment her on her good behavior, but he didn't have time. Lolly stepped out onto the hotel carpet in her little blue doll's dress, and hugged herself. The cloth began to shred, and finally burst apart as the girl from 01-84 transformed herself to Earth height.

"No!" Mortimer groaned. "Not again, please!"

She pouted prettily. "Sometimes I think you don't like me, Mortimer."

"I do. But not without clothes on."

"That's strange. On 01-84, that's the *only* way men like me." Her face brightened. "I know what's wrong. Maybe if *you* didn't have any clothes on either—"

"Never mind that! I've got something very important to do today. I want you to meet an old—friend of mine. Dr. Hugo Holmeyer." He gritted his teeth when he said the name.

"But I don't want to meet other men, Mortimer. I just want you."

"Believe me, Lolly, it's very important to me."

"All right," she said cheerfully. "Then can we come back here and—talk?"

"We'll see." Mortimer picked up the hotel phone and called Hugo's number. When he heard the familiar, pompous voice on the other end, he almost giggled with anticipatory glee.

"Hugo?" he said. "This is Mortimer Wormstocker."

"Wormstocker? What the hell do you want?"

"Oh, I was in New York for a day, so I thought I'd ring you up."

"What for? I've got nothing to say to you."

"But I have something for *you*, Hugo. A little discovery of mine. I think you'll be very interested."

"Don't tell me," Hugo said sourly. "You haven't found the cold cure?"

"No . . ."

"Aha!"

"But I found something else. A visitor from another galaxy—"

"What? Wormstocker, are you out of your head? You've been overworking."

"Maybe so. But if you'd like to see her, Hugo, I'll be glad to bring her over."

"I haven't got time for your nonsense!"

"Okay," Mortimer said casually. "But she's a woman only one foot high."

"What did you say?"

"I said she's only one foot high. Just thought you might be interested."

There was a brief pause. Then Hugo Holmeyer, in syrupy tones, said: "Of course I'm interested, old friend. *Very* interested! Have you got this little creature with you?"

"Naturally. I'll bring her over whenever you say."

"Good, good," Hugo said sweetly. "You do that, Mortimer. You bring your little friend over, in about an hour."

"That would be fine. And

you don't have to humor me, Hugo. I tell you she's real."

"Naturally! N a t u r a l l y, Mortimer. You come by in an hour. I'll be right here."

Mortimer hung up and chuckled aloud. "He thinks I'm crazy! But we'll show him!"

"When?" Lolly said.

"In about an hour."

"Oh, goody! Then we just have time for—"

"No, we don't!" Mortimer said nervously. "You make yourself small and we'll go sightseeing. I've never been to New York before."

"All right," Lolly pouted.

They left the hotel room ten minutes later. There was still plenty of time before his visit to Holmeyer's apartment, but he didn't dare to remain alone in the hotel room with Lolly and her one-track mind.

He walked slowly up and down the city streets, gawking at the tall buildings.

"Psst!" Lolly's tiny voice said.

"What is it?"

"Problem."

He lifted the cage to his ear. "What problem?"

"Got to go somewhere."

"Go where?"

"*You* know."

"No, I don't."

"Yes, you do!"

"Oh," Mortimer gulped. "But we're ten blocks from the hotel."

"Better let me out then."

"No, I can't!" He looked around wildly, and spotted a sign that said: RESTAURANT. "All right, we'll go somewhere. But you must be very careful."

"I'm *trying* to be careful," Lolly said. "But I think you better hurry."

Mortimer quickened his pace. When he entered the restaurant, a tired-looking waitress came up to them.

"Pardon me," he said. "Can you tell me where the ladies' room is?"

"The what?"

"I mean the men's room!"

She looked at him suspiciously. "Through that door."

Fortunately, the two lavatories turned out to be side by side. He looked around him, and pushed open the door marked HERS with his fingertips. Then he skidded the cage inside.

He went into the adjoining men's room and looked into the mirror. His long face was pale.

"Just one day," he told himself. "One day to ruin a whole career . . ."

He washed his hands and left. He stopped at the La-

dies' door and listened for sounds of Lolly's return.

Somebody screamed!

Quickly, Mortimer hit the door with the palm of his hand and pushed it open. Lolly was just crawling back into the cage and pulling the door shut behind her. He grabbed for the handle and ran.

When they were out of sight of the restaurant, Mortimer fell panting against a building wall. "What happened?" he said.

Lolly giggled. "There was a woman in the booth next to me. She came out when I was heading for the cage."

"We better get to Holmeyer's," Mortimer said. "Before they toss me in jail again."

Hugo Holmeyer and his wife Jennifer lived in the penthouse of a Sutton Place building. Hugo had made quite a success in the field of antibiotics, and the rewards for his efforts had been handsome. Mortimer was somewhat awed by the splendor of the building lobby, and by the fact that the entrance to Hugo's penthouse retreat was effected by the use of a private elevator.

He tightened the grip on the handle of the traveling cage, and pressed the button marked P firmly.

Hugo himself answered. He was wearing a brocaded dressing gown of shiny satin, and there were yards of it necessary to cover his enormous bulk. Hugo had always been a large man, but every increasingly successful year had added pound after pound.

"Well, well!" he said jovially. "What a pleasure to see you, Mortimer!"

Mortimer nodded, and realized that Hugo was still humoring him. That was fine with him; it made the ultimate revelation all the more appetizing.

"Hello, Hugo," he said coldly. "May we come in?"

"We?" Hugo said. His eyes went to the cage in Mortimer's hand and he laughed. "Of course. Come in—*both* of you!"

The front room was cavernous, with a thick-napped carpet stretching everywhere. There were expensive-looking bric-a-brac on every shelf. It was impressive, but Mortimer didn't pause to appreciate it. He was looking at the stranger who was rising from a wing chair near the fireplace.

"Mortimer," Hugo said, bringing him over, "want you to meet a dear friend of

mine. Dr. Farrington, this is the man I've told you so much about. My dear classmate and colleague, Dr. Mortimer Wormstocker."

The man was tall and thin and gloomy as an undertaker. He shook hands with himself and bowed slightly. "Pleased to meet you," he said, in sepulchral tones.

"I didn't know you had company, Hugo," Mortimer said uneasily. "Perhaps I'd better come back—"

"No, no! Dr. Farrington is very interested in your astounding discovery. Aren't you, Doctor?"

"Very," the tall man said.

"Are you a biologist?" Mortimer said.

"No. Psychiatry is my line."

"Matter of fact," Hugo said proudly, "Dr. Farrington is the admitting physician at our leading mental hospital. Aren't you, Doctor?"

Mortimer gulped. "I know what you're thinking, Hugo! But you're wrong. I'll show you both."

He put the box on the floor, and unlatched the cage.

Lolly stepped out on the rug, and flung out her arms with such fanfare that Mortimer had to chuckle. He continued to chuckle as he saw the eyes of the two men grow wider and wider, their skins paler, their lips trembling with words of surprise that never escaped their throats.

"It's imposible!" Farrington said. "It can't be true!"

"I told you," Mortimer said casually. "She's from a planet called 01-84. She's here on a two-week vacation."

"I don't believe it," Hugo was saying softly, backing against the wall and staring at the tiny, curvacious figure on his expensive rug. "You've got us hypnotized. It's some kind of trick—"

"Oh, but that's not all," Mortimer said. "Show them how you can grow up, Lolly."

She giggled, and wrapped her arms around her torso. She vibrated and glowed slightly, and then the growth process accelerated. In another moment, she was five-feet-four of vivid nudity.

The head-doctor shrieked, and all Hugo Holmeyer could do was gape stupidly.

"My!" Lolly said, simpering in Hugo's direction. "Your friend's a *big* one, isn't he? But he's sort of cute—"

"Stay away from me!" Hugo yelped.

"How about you, Dr. Farrington?" Mortimer said. "Still think I'm crazy?"

"No," Farrington said. "I think I am!" He walked backwards to the foyer of the apartment, clapped his Homburg on his head, and vanished into the private elevator. They could hear its motors whining as the car descended.

"Keep away," Hugo said, as Lolly kept advancing towards him, wriggling her body seductively.

"You Earth men are silly!" she laughed. "Don't any of you like women?"

"How about it, Hugo?" Mortimer said. He took a seat on the sofa and crossed his legs. He was enjoying this. "Don't you like women? You'll have to admit—she's a gorgeous specimen."

Lolly's hands were at the lapels of Hugo's dressing gown, her curved body pushing against his massive stomach. "Stop it!" he squealed. "Don't *do* that—"

"Kiss me, you fat old thing!"

"Mortimer, help me!"

"You're on your own, Hugo!"

Between Hugo's shrieks of protest, Lolly's giggling, and Mortimer's own pleased laughter, none of them heard the returning whine of the elevator. But they couldn't miss the piercing cry that cut through the room.

"HUGO!"

Everything stopped dead. Even the clocks seemed stilled. They whirled to face the source of the shrill, commanding sound.

It was a woman, standing in the doorway. She was a small, frail, tight little woman as compact as a closed umbrella. She glowered at Hugo with burning green eyes.

"Hugo Holmeyer! So *this* is the old friend!"

"Jennifer!" Hugo bleated. "Jennifer, you don't understand—"

"I don't, huh?" Jennifer shrieked. "Since when don't I understand a naked floozy?"

She steamrolled towards him with such venom in her eyes that Lolly blinked and stepped aside.

"Jennifer!" Hugo shielded his moon face with both hands. "Please, Jennifer! Let me explain—"

"I'll fix you! You and your bum friends!" She managed to gather an assortment of bric-a-brac on her way to him, including a thin-necked vase. That was the first object to crash over Hugo Hol-

meyer's head. But it was only the beginning of the barrage.

"Help!" Hugo cried. "Jennifer, listen to me!"

"You fat Romeo! You old lecher!"

"My goodness!" Lolly said, shrinking from the sight.

Mortimer leaped from the sofa. "Quick," he told the girl. "Get small! And hurry!"

Lolly obeyed, with one last frightened glance at Hugo's belligerent wife. She hugged herself and diminished rapidly to her normal tiny size, then skittered across the rug and literally dived into the traveling cage. Mortimer was right behind her, and he slammed the door shut and grabbed for the handle.

"Wormstocker!" H u g o pleaded. "Wormstocker, help me! Explain! Explain!"

"Explain it yourself," Mortimer said, and ran for the safety of the elevator.

It was only after the door had closed behind the violent scene inside that Mortimer began to laugh. He laughed wildly, crazily, stomping up and down in the elevator car. He maintained the hilarity all the way back to the Hotel Sutton Park.

But when Mortimer began to pack in readiness for his return trip, his face was sad again. Lolly, perched atop the telephone, saw his depression and said:

"What's the matter, Mortimer? You were so happy a little while ago."

"Sure," he said bitterly. "But what I got to be happy about? I've been fired, remember? All that work—for nothing. Now I'll have to start all over again somewhere else."

"That's too bad," Lolly said sympathetically. "What sort of work is it, Mortimer?"

"You wouldn't understand. I'm a research chemist. I've been trying to find a cure for the common cold. Another year maybe, and I might have found the answer."

"What's a cold?"

"It's a sort of virus infection we're subject to on Earth. Almost everybody gets 'em. It's a respiratory ailment; sneezes, sniffles, that sort of thing."

She blinked at him. "Don't you use anti-infection shots?"

"Oh, we have all kinds of shots. But nothing that'll cure or prevent colds. It's such an elusive virus—"

"But we cured that sort of thing ages ago! It's so simple!"

"I wish you were a scien-

tist," Mortimer said gloomily. "Maybe you could tell me about it."

"Well, I could *send* you the serum formula. If you want me to."

Mortimer stopped packing and stared at her. "Send it to me? How?"

"I have a friend on 01-84," Lolly smiled. "He knows all about such things. I can send you the formula the same way I arrived here. Right in your own vacuum flask. Want me to do that?"

"Do I?" Mortimer said. "Lolly, you don't know what it would *mean* to me. To the whole planet!"

"All right, then. I'll send it to you—"

"Wonderful!"

"—on one condition."

"Condition? What kind of condition?"

"Well, my vacation trip will be over in another hour. The quadridimensional warp will take me back to 01-84, and I—"

"Wait a minute! I thought you had two weeks?"

She smiled sadly. "Oh, I do. But I'm afraid two weeks on your world is only two days on 01-84. We're a much smaller little place. So I really have to get started. However, there's one thing I still haven't learned—"

"What's that?"

She hopped off the receiver, and landed beside him. Then she hugged herself. When Lolly was Earth size, she leaned on Mortimer's shoulder and said: "I still don't know about the most important thing of all. Sex."

"Sex?" Mortimer gulped. "I thought you knew everything."

"Not about sex on Earth. You've kept me completely in the dark about it, Mortimer. If you want the serum formula, you'll just have to show me."

Mortimer swallowed hard and pushed the suitcase to one side of the bed.

"All right," he said bravely. "For the sake of science . . . no sacrifice too great . . ."

He reached over and took Lolly in his arms. They were just about to exchange an inflammatory kiss, when the door opened.

"Mortimer!"

He released Lolly and she tumbled onto the bed, looking shocked and surprised.

"Miss Cooper!" What are *you* doing here?"

"I followed you! Don't you know you could be arrested for jumping bail?" She cast one look at Lolly's nakedness and lifted her

chin in disgust. "But I suppose you had your reasons, didn't you, Mortimer?"

"No, you're wrong!" he protested. "This is Lolly. She's from another world. She came in a—"

"She looks ordinary to me," Cherry sniffed. She walked towards the bed, and Lolly cried out in fear.

"Don't!" she pleaded. "Don't hurt me!"

"Hurt you?" Cherry said.

"Yes! I saw what happened to the fat man. That little woman almost killed him!" She looked timidly at Mortimer. "Now I know why you Earth men behave so strangely. It's because of the Earth women!"

She hugged herself, and began to shrink.

Cherry Cooper took one look at what she was doing, and crumpled to the floor in a dead faint.

"Cherry!" Mortimer went to her and began rubbing her wrists. "Now see what you've done!" he said crossly. "You've made the poor girl faint!"

"Poor girl nothing," Lolly said. "These Earth women are monsters! Thank heavens we're *sensible* on 01-84. Believe me, I'll be glad to get back—"

"But Lolly! Does that mean I won't get the formula?"

"Oh, I'll send it to you, all right." She looked at him sadly. "You poor man. You need all the help you can get."

She tiptoed across the floor and reached up to plant a sweet little kiss on his cheek. She turned away.

"Good-bye, Mortimer. It was fun . . ."

Lightning seemed to crack through the room. A blaze of cold blue light illuminated the walls and furnishings. Mortimer put his hands over his eyes until the flash subsided.

When he opened them, Lolly was gone.

Soon after Cherry groaned and stirred.

"Cherry, dear," Mortimer said anxiously. "Are you all right?"

"What happened?"

"Nothing. You had a little fainting spell."

"Where's that woman?"

"What woman?"

"That naked woman that was here!"

Mortimer clucked. "Naked woman? Poor Cherry! You must have caught it from Mr. Chisolm."

"Caught what?"

"Optica dementia erotica. Quite a lot of it going around

these days. But don't worry about it. It's no worse than a bad cold." He grinned suddenly. "And speaking of colds, we don't have to worry about *them* anymore, either. In a couple of days I'll have the cure!"

Cherry looked around the room in a daze. "You mean I *didn't* see a naked woman here?"

"Of course not. See? The room's empty. Nobody here but you and I."

She leaned against him, her red hair brushing his face.

"That's right," she sighed. "Nobody here but you and I. Mortimer . . ."

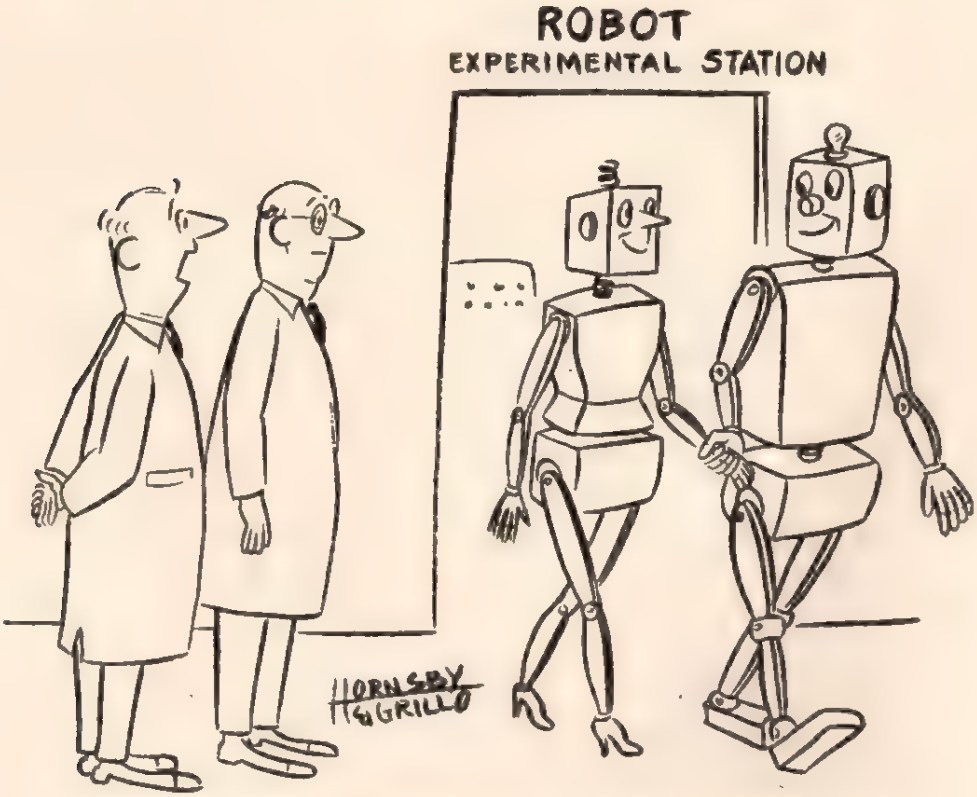
"Yes, Cherry?"

"Is it serious? This optica dementia erotica?"

"Of course not. All you have to do is spend some time in bed."

Cherry sighed happily, and pushed the door closed with one hand.

"That suits me fine," she said. **THE END**



"I built *him*, but I don't know where he got *her*."

GRAYGORTCH

By DON WILCOX

Where does the macabre end and pure horror begin? Is death itself the answer? Or do the shades that lie beyond it bring greater terror to the human mind? Whatever the answer, we present here a story in this genre; one that might well have come from the pen of Edgar Allan Poe.

WE WAIT beneath the window of his office. We wait, untouched by the rain, we who are shadows. We see him look out at the blackness of the downpour. We know he broods, for he has not forgot . . .

Graygortch lingered late in his office, looking out at the rain. He scowled down at the strange newsboy who stood huddled like a wet duck under the edge of the marquee, two floors below, languidly selling his papers.

Graygortch hated rain. He moved restlessly from the window. His eyes played over the surface of the desk ornament, which stared back at him vacantly. It was a human skull, mounted on a black marble base, and on rainy nights it gave off a certain glow.

It was the skull of Melton, one of the last men Graygortch had killed before he returned from Africa.

"You need a light, Mr. Graygortch?" The little old woman who cleaned the office looked in. Ugly chrone. Always making some stupid effort to be friendly. She switched on his light and then went away.

Now Graygortch's reflection glared back at him from the window. Through the montage of streaming traffic lights his reflected eyes shone, dark balls of fire within heavy drooping lids. He was aware of the strength of his blunt features, thick-muscled shoulders, powerful arms that knew how to lash

whips over the backs of lagging workers. The African mines had given full play to his talents. But now. Now the life of a pampered parlor cat. Sickeningly soft. Plush office. Black business suit. Owner of mines. Rich. With a pretense of good manners. His powerful shoulders were wasting. The image in the window mocked him.

"You need light, Mr. Graygortch." The cleaning woman was back. "You can't work without light. Strain your eyes."

"Turn it off."

"You want it off, Mr. Graygortch?" She turned the light off. "Am I too early, Mr. Graygortch?"

"Keep your damn furniture polish off my skull." He pointed to the desk ornament. "It's turning yellow."

"That yellow, that's on account of age, Mr. Graygortch. Or either it's an imitation."

"It's no imitation."

"It's a hundred years old, I expect."

"It's five years old. Five years today."

"O-oh!"

"And keep your grimy hands off."

"I will, Mr. Graygortch. I will." She made a sort of bow. Ugly old witch. Graygortch walked around the desk and put on his all-weather coat and an old gray felt hat. He took the elevator down.

He ignored the elevator man's, "Good night, Mr. Graygortch," and walked out of the building.

Under the marquee he paused. The strange newsboy was still there, standing at the edge of the downpour.

"Paper?"

Graygortch tried to hail a taxi.

"Paper, Mr. Graygortch?"

"How'd you know my name? . . . You and your water-soaked papers! Who dredged you up out of the sewer? Get out of my doorway."

The boy backed away. Or was he a boy? He looked more like a little old man. With curiously crinkled yellowish eyes. A thin cackling voice. "Please buy a paper, Mr. Graygortch."

Graygortch brushed past him, flung a hand as if to slap him, but snatched the paper instead. A taxi drew up and he opened the door, swung in, and sped off. He barely glanced back to see the yellow-eyed little man standing there, hand extended, as if still waiting for his money. The marquee became

A cry—"Let the play go on"—spewed from hideous throats.

a blur in the neon-lighted rain, and Graygortch scrunched back in his seat. He opened the paper and stared.

Passing lights revealed the headline.

Two words. Nothing else. It was not a newspaper, it was a piece of parchment, and the black-lettered message read: "GRAYGORTCH CHOSEN."

We taxi him through the rain and fog. His eyes reveal confusion. Our message, our two-word message. Reminder of the past! Reminder of our African chief, Bozizo. But little does he guess, as yet, the powers of the dead! . . .

The taxi drove off the artery, onto a side street that led nowhere.

"Back to my office!" Graygortch commanded for the third time. His voice had gone tight. "Back to Nineteenth. Make another right. That yellow-eyed devil—turn right—right, you numbskull! This is a dead end. Can't you read? It goes straight into the mountain. Stop, you idiot!"

The taxi accelerated. The black mountainside loomed in the steamy rain. The car plunged through a gap in the barrier. Thick fog. The mountain wall engulfed the yellow headlights. Some sort of unlighted passageway drew them in. Graygortch had the feeling of being whooshed into a pneumatic tube. No use wasting breath on the driver now. No chance of turning around in this place. It must be some old tunnel to the ocean road. Graygortch sat tight. He imagined he saw a blob of blue somewhere ahead. It kept receding. Deeper and deeper into the tunnel.

"Driver! Get me out of this! Do you hear? Back to my office. Driver!"

Graygortch reached to shake the fellow by the shoulders. The horn blared. It stuck. Noise roared from the walls.

"Stop that damn thing! Stop it!"

His hand struck out. His grip locked on the back of the driver's neck, tightened, froze. This was not human flesh. There was no driver. This was a dummy stuffed into clothing. It sagged away from the wheel and fell to the side. The car rushed on, choosing its own path. Down the open tunnel. Accelerating down the long grade. With a frenzied curse Graygortch dived into the front seat,

seized the wheel. His feet jammed for the brake. It didn't work. Nothing responded to his touch. He couldn't even stop the noise of the horn.

Birds came flying into the headlights. Gull-like birds, black and silver. Ten or twelve—then scores. Over the car they swerved. They crashed into the lights. They split the windshield. Their death-squawks shrilled above the wail of the horn. The tunnel was suddenly filled with flapping wings. Thousands. Through breaking glass they burst in upon Graygortch. Then the car stopped, clogged by the jungle of batting wings. No more lights. Motor and horn faded and died.

Blackness.

Blackness and the afterimage of black and silver wings. And now the sounds of flapping waned. The birds must be rising. Or the car sinking.

The dash was dead. Graygortch tried to strike a light. Even his cigarette lighter refused to function.

For minutes he waited in the darkness, still with the strange feeling that he was sinking. An illusion? He would get out. He would walk back through the tunnel. He would return to his building and find that yellow-eyed man and demand to know the source of that baleful message . . .

We wedge the wheeled conveyance in the earth. Trembling with shock, our guest commands his feet . . . . Now, will he fall with us? Will he come with us, down through unknown dimensions? A world of shadows waits, somewhere beneath . . . down . . . down . . . down . . .

Graygortch breathed hard. The air pressure had changed. The smell of the air—he could have sworn he was back in the African mines. He felt as if he had fallen obliquely over oceans and continents, and all in utter blackness. But now his feet stood solid upon a rocky path. Again he tried to strike a light. The cigarette lighter refused to spark. In disgust he flung it aside, heard it bounce off the surface of rocks. From the chain of echoes he guessed that he was in a vast cavern . . . New, yet old . . . The familiar smell of the mines . . .

His nerves quivered. Distinctly he heard the faint cackle of a man's voice sounding through the coal blackness. He turned and

thought he saw, for an instant, the glow of those crinkly yellow eyes . . .

The eyes came closer. And the voice. "We got you here safe, Mr. Graygortch. It wasn't easy. Our chief, Bozizo, has waited five years. He wanted to be sure—"

Graygortch slashed at the eyes with his fists. He struck nothing. The voice stopped short, however, and the two little triangles of luminous yellow disappeared. Again, only blackness and silence.

Cautiously Graygortch attempted to walk. He stumbled. He crouched. He felt his way over the stones he couldn't see. The echoes of his steps told him he was moving toward one of the cavern walls. He listened.

Whispers. Low voices, very near. Then a voice spoke up —a voice he had not heard for five years—a low, rumbling voice, thick with accent.

"You've come, Master Graygortch."

It was the voice of Bozizo, the chief.

Graygortch responded very nervously. "You're not alive. You can't be. You died—you and Melton—on the same day—"

"You've come, and we welcome you." Slow, heavy words. Bozizo always spoke as though there were other listeners in hiding. "In our shadow world we wait for you. We desire entertainment. A drama from the past. We have chosen you for our hero."

"Hero! Where am I? This is all a hoax. Who are you, there in the dark, and where did you get that voice?"

"You have come here to be the hero of a play—"

"I'll meet you in a fair fight any day—in the light!"

"You mean you cannot see? But you will, soon—"

"If I had a whip—"

"The first act of our play does not call for a whip," Bozizo said calmly. "Only a long pole with a fork in the end. Remember?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"The audience in the shadows understands. They are watching each move you make. Hear them whisper? For five years they have talked of you and have waited. They want to see the great Graygortch re-enact the past. Graygortch, the white master with the shoulders . . . Ah, now you begin to see? The purple lights seep through the blackness. Do you not see the edge of the river?"

"I see it," Graygortch said. The lines of purple that became visible through the blackness formed a pattern that matched a long-forgotten memory. "Yes, I see the river. This is the path, and here is the edge."

"And you are the hero, the man of steel, the man everyone must obey. What do you see in the river?"

"A swimmer," said Graygortch. "He's swimming the flood waters—"

"To bring you a message?"

"Yes . . . yes, I remember . . ."

"He is a native from my tribe. He has risked his life to bring you the message, obeying my order. See him come near? Listen!"

Sounds of the flooding river. Of a swimmer approaching. His garbled shouting. The message.

Then Bozizo, again, at Graygortch's side. "You did not like the message. It angered you. So what did you do? Here is the forked pole. You are the hero. Play your part."

Graygortch started to protest. "There's no need—"

"We are only shadows, Graygortch. You cannot hurt us. Not now. Take the forked pole. He's about to reach our shore—"

"There's no need—"

"There was never any need. But you are the hero, and so you indulge your slightest anger. Act!"

Graygortch moved to the edge of the purple stream and plunged the fork over the neck of the approaching swimmer. The gasping for breath was muffled.

Bozizo said. "That's right, don't let him come up. He won't struggle long. He's already exhausted . . . There, just as you did it in real life . . . Hear the bubbles?"

Yet even as we traced the steps of murders past and gone, his name was named above. The living world above remarked his former legal name. WANTED: L. T. Gray . . . Lawrence Gray . . .

The tall man with thinning brown hair paused at the door of one of the cubicles where a plump girl sat at a desk, writing. She was dressed in a crisp white blouse and dark blue skirt, and her handwriting was neat and round. She was penning careful notes in the upper right hand corners of a set of papers from the files.

"Getting all the old ones classified?" the supervisor asked in a friendly manner.

"Quite a dusty job. Excuse me if I take a moment to check on your progress . . . Any difficulties? How about this one?"

"I wasn't sure where to place it. It's one of the incompletes." The girl pointed to the typed notations on the back of the sheet. "Apparently he left the country and went to Africa twenty years ago."

"H-m-m . . . Have you tried case L-28 for a possible follow-up?"

"There was nothing. Not under the name of Lawrence Gray."

The supervisor's eyes lingered on the girl for a moment, then returned to the papers. "Perhaps I'll find time to give you a little assistance on the tough ones. What do we have, here? Police record: Eight arrests. Three imprisonments. Always good behavior in prison. But the motives?"

"They evidently never bothered to find out."

"It isn't always easy," you know."

"I'm new at this," the girl said hesitantly, but if I may offer a suggestion—"

"Certainly, Miss Johnson."

"What I mean is, if he's been gone twenty years, why don't we throw it out altogether?"

"Oh, my dear Miss Johnson!" The supervisor straightened. "The superintendent wants some sort of interpretation for every case. Not just the easy ones. That's the whole point. Ah—m-m-m, just hold this case with the unclassified items. Maybe we can catch him under another name."

"Catch him?" She raised a teasing eyebrow.

"Statistically speaking." He lowered his voice to imply a faint reprimand. "Our department is not interested in apprehending, you know. Merely in classifying. Carry on, Miss Johnson."

The scenes play on . . . The natives in the mines . . . the work . . . the sweat . . . the lash . . . always the lash . . . the shoulders and arms of Graygortch, known to us all, even to me, the water boy, the dwarf with the cackling voice and the yellow eyes . . .

Now, before our eyes, he whips another of our brothers to death . . . We, the shadows of this realm, watch closely . . . What are his feelings? Is he reluctant to remember? Who can tell?

But now, out of our shadows, comes Graygortch's

friend named Melton . . . Melton, small of frame, large of heart . . . sensitive, cool . . . Melton, the quiet man of reason . . .

"Graygortch, have you killed another man with the whip?"

The voice of Melton! It was only a play, a play of shadows, yet Graygortch stood trembling, hearing once again the voice. A nudge from the chief reminded him this was his cue. Action. Gestures. Oh, yes, the fallen native at his feet. The whip at his side. And the words—they came to him unprompted. "I didn't kill him. And what difference if I did?"

"He's dying, obviously." Melton again.

And Graygortch, in a voice of unconcern. "He still breathes. He can live if he wants to. Maybe he'd rather die. Why not, if he can't work without starting fights? He's given the men trouble enough."

The light had changed from dense purple to highlights of red. The mountain wall showed black, edged with flakes of red. Black—the jungle, the river, the figures of natives moving into the compound. Across the red-lighted body of the fallen man, the streams of blood showed black.

The weird flame of red showed from Melton's deep-set eyes. A savage light in the eyes of a cultured man. Light that kindled memories for Graygortch . . . The English words, clear-spoken in a low-pitched voice — this was indeed Melton as if he were standing there alive, shaming Graygortch for the folly of a needless murder.

"He still breathes," Graygortch repeated heavily.

"He'll die."

"He deserves nothing at my hands."

"Your hands are deeply stained," Melton said. "Have you no feelings, Graygortch?"

"He had earned those lashes. He came along. I held the whip. I needed exercise." Graygortch paused. There must have been stronger words that could have been chosen. But these were enough to set the shadow audience whispering all along the slope above the river. They saw and heard everything, and they quieted hopefully at the soft words of Melton:

"This is wrong, Graygortch. If things were reversed—if they held the whip—"

"They'd murder me in a minute."

"*Why?* With or without cause?"

"You have duties elsewhere, Melton," Graygortch said brusquely. "Don't let me detain you."

"Before I leave, I want you to assure me." Melton pointed to the form of the dying man. "Not again, Graygortch."

Then Melton was gone and Graygortch stood in silence, looking moodily at the black form at his feet. At his elbow Chief Bozizo prompted him. What next? Go on.

Graygortch looked about. In the darkness he discerned the vertical lines of a building, his headquarters at the edge of the compound. Riches had poured in. How well he remembered the fine clothing he had brought back from a trip to the coast. Badge of authority. Would any servant dare exercise the indecency to try on some of those clothes during Graygortch's absence?

Graygortch moved swiftly. He burst in upon the scene. There the sly fellow was, prancing about before a mirror in the new silks and serges. The shadow of the real, exactly as it had happened. He leaped back from the sight of Graygortch.

"You'll die for this!" Graygortch reached for the whip. No—not the whip! His promise to Melton! Instantly he called an order to one of his dependable men. "Call the tribe together. They'll see with their own eyes what happens to this sneak!"

A gentle prompting from Bozizo reminded Graygortch that a broad smile of mockery should cross his lips and he should utter the word, "Justice," with each speech. Then, as the shadowy tribe miraculously assembled, Graygortch explained. The punishment would match the crime. This brazen native—let him be stripped of his own fanciest possessions—the garb which nature had given him: his fine-grained skin, his thick-grown scalp. These would be taken for Graygortch's adornment.

Graygortch moved through the action from memory. He ascended to an elevated seat and waited. He listened for the cry of the servant, bound and helpless. The offender was scalped alive; then a band of skin was cut from his belly. Crude adornments for such a hero as Graygortch, but he voiced the opinion that the natives

would remember. (And again Bozizo prompted: "A little more of the mouth of mockery should accompany the hero's brave words.")

Does Graygortch smile to himself with sadistic pleasure? Or do his guts contract with revulsion? Who knows? Why should he wince? The skin is not being cut from his body. The scalp is not being torn from his head. Need any such deeds tease him with remorse, now or ever? Who can tell? He is Graygortch, the man with the shoulders, the man with the whip. The man with the soul of lead. A conscience? Who knows?

The plump girl sitting at a desk looked up at the tall thin-haired man who had returned for a smile and another word about one of the unclassified cases.

She handed him the case of Lawrence Gray, saying, "How can anyone know whether this man had a conscience? And if he didn't have, how can the courts have considered him morally responsible?"

"A good question, Miss Johnson."

"There's so little in the record."

"Exactly."

"Apparently he had no feeling whatever for his victims."

"A psychopath, then, shall we say? It's the convenient dumping ground. The fact is, so often we simply can't get beneath the surface . . . Oh-oh, what's this?" The supervisor picked up the old photo of L. T. Gray and studied it. Carefully.

"Anything wrong?" Miss Johnson asked.

"H-m-m . . . Probably just my imagination—still—don't his eyes remind you of the picture in this morning's paper? It was a story of some businessman in one of the coast cities—"

"Who disappeared?"

"Yes — last night — under strange circumstances."

They turned through the morning paper and found the story of a taxi that had mysteriously plunged into an old mountain tunnel. *Driverless,* the article said. But a passenger had been recognized as the car turned off the pavement. A businessman named Graygortch, an owner of African mines. Soon after, the crashed taxi had been found, but Graygortch could not be located.

"There's a definite resemblance," Miss Johnson ob-

served. "The eyes. The folds of the ears."

"I'd better show this to the superintendent," the supervisor said. "Come along, Miss Johnson."

A conscience? What is a conscience? Does it occupy space? Does it add to one's weight? Then let it walk on its own legs and be named Melton. Let it keep out from under foot. Graygortch wants no stumbling blocks in his patch. The path of the psychopath.

In the realm of shadows the scenes shifted. Graygortch hurried along a trail to a deep amber-lighted gorge. Amber-colored rocks showed through the blackness of the mountain walls. Here the company would commence new mining operations. But not without trouble. Their right to the land was disputed. A native tribe arrived, humans and pack animals and baggage, and claimed the right to build their village here.

They lived primitive lives.

They were a warlike tribe, no good for work. Their supplies were just what Graygortch needed. The easiest way would have been for Graygortch's lieutenants to shoot them down and take their goods.

Graygortch ordered that the firearms be made ready.

But Melton said no.

"No, Graygortch." The voice of Melton's shadow brought reality once again to the unforgotten past. "No, no firearms. You are rich, now, Graygortch. Buy off this tribe if you wish, but no more of shooting down in cold blood."

Graygortch scoffed. "I suppose you would walk fifty miles for Chief Bozizo in order to make our purchase legal."

"To save the lives of five hundred natives—yes. I'll go at once." Melton prepared for the hike.

When Melton was out of sight, Graygortch issued swift orders. Have the native tribe deposit their supplies at a convenient place. Have them come to a certain cave. They would be treated to a feast; they would be entertained by music from a tin phonograph. Then Graygortch would talk business with them.

Graygortch stood by and watched them enter the cave. Plenty of room for all, he said.

The opening to the cave was small and round. A large

cat might have entered without difficulty, or a young lion, or an average-sized human being. Men and women and children entered, not knowing they were being crowded into an air-tight chamber in the mountain wall. The music of the tin phonograph drew them in. Baskets of food were passed through the opening. A feast by torchlight.

Graygortch and his men waited on the outside until all the tribe had entered except the last man. He was a huge man. His girth was too great for him to squeeze through the limited space. They forced him to try. His body was caught.

A plug of human flesh in the entrance!

He struggled helplessly.

Graygortch and his men were ready. They heaped loads of earth and rock over him. They released an avalanche from above. It roared down and buried all signs of the cave entrance. The entire tribe was locked within, to suffocate.

Graygortch stood gazing at the scene. So naturally had the avalanche come down that it appeared to have been an act of God.

At Graygortch's side was his prompter, the shadow of Bozizo, who said, "Would you like to see within, to know how they fought the walls with their nails? Or would you prefer to imagine it? Have you guessed what happened to heavy man who blocked their escape? . . . Your words are next, Graygortch."

"I don't remember what I'm supposed to say."

"You've forgotten? Your words were, 'Stupid ignorant lot.' "

"Stupid ignorant lot," Graygortch repeated.

The shadow of the chief nodded. Then, as if to lift Graygortch out of his reflections, he further prompted: "When your friend Melton returns he will ask where the tribe has gone, but you will not remember. However, you will note that all their supplies have been abandoned, and the way is clear for your new mining venture to proceed . . . Thus your riches increase . . ."

Graygortch stood, not moving, not revealing by so much as a flick of his sullen eyes what his feelings might be.

Our play has almost run its course, and yet . . . We the shadows of the realm of death still know not if our hero

(hero, indeed!) ever felt remorse . . . but was there not hope . . . as long as there was Melton?

Rain. The blackness of the storm moved over the scene. Angry green clouds unleashed their furies. Sheets of rain knifed down through the black twisted arms of jungle trees. Flashes of green lightning jumped over the swirling surfaces of the black river.

Was the shadow audience still there, concealed among the dark olive-colored rocks, watching each move, listening for each word against the roar of the storm?

The thunders faded. The downpour settled into a solid hiss of rain, sifting down over the mountain walls, streaming in rivulets over the vines and roots. Graygortch watched moodily.

He had moved away from the scene of the buried cave a few minutes before the storm had begun. Now he stood within an alcove of rock.

Then—just as it had happened five years before—he discovered that both Melton and Chief Bozizo were standing only a few feet away, watching him. The chief, his old face revealing trouble and pain, was questioning Melton. Graygortch knew what they were talking about. The chief was trying to find out where the missing tribe had gone. And Melton, not knowing, was parrying the questions.

The glint of determination in the old chief's eyes was well remembered. So it had happened five years ago. With everything to fear, the savage native leader had sworn he would learn who—whether Graygortch or Melton or someone else—held the key to the mystery of five hundred native men, women and children, *missing!*

And so it was that Bozizo voiced the threat that might cost him his life. He would learn who was responsible if he had to follow them all the way to hell. And when he learned *who,* he would force the guilty one to re-enact his crime, if crime it be, to be seen by every human soul who had suffered pain at his hands.

Graygortch heard the threat, and gave back the steady eye to the glinting gaze of the old chief.

"You say you'll make the guilty one face his guilt?"

"If I have to pursue him to the shadow world beyond this life!"

"What makes you so sure there's any guilt involved? It wouldn't be the first time the earth has swallowed up a tribe or a nation."

"What do you know, Graygortch?"

"Enough to lead you to the answer."

"Lead, then!"

Graygortch led them along the rain-filled path, over gushing springs, up through umbrella branches, up along a slippery path higher and higher along the face of the mountain wall. He climbed with avid determination.

"Lead on," Chief Bozizo said. "We can go where you go."

But Melton lagged behind when the way grew more perilous. Graygortch said, "Give him a hand."

He caught the suspicious look in the chief's eye. (In shadow, now, Bozizo was playing himself to perfection.) A suspicious look—yes! Graygortch had offered a suggestion that sounded like kindness to a fellow man. *Give him a hand.* The wise old chief, staying two steps back of Graygortch, faced him. "You go back and give him a hand yourself. I will not turn my back on you."

Graygortch's anger flared, but he said, "Forget it, Chief. He'll catch up."

They started on. Melton was not yet in sight. They had come far enough, Graygortch decided. The rocks were high here. No one would know. He turned suddenly, drawing his pistol, and shot the old chief through the heart.

Bozizo sank. The well-remembered sound of coughing. The breath of life went out of him. The same poisonous look of vengeance in the eyes, going closed. In the eyes of this shadow, re-enacting. Everything was as it had been.

Graygortch moved through the remainder of his act nervously. He lifted the fallen body and hurled it into the wilderness of jagged rocks below. He walked a few yards down the path until he saw Melton, plodding up the way slowly.

Melton called, "Where's Bozizo?"

"Ahead. Waiting for you. The path's slippery. We'll help you over."

"I heard a sound like a pistol shot."

"A rock fell."

"I hope that was all."

"What do you mean?"

Melton paused, breathing hard. "I don't like the look of this, Graygortch."

"The light atmosphere's gone to your head."

"I've stuck by you, Graygortch—"

"Stop talking! Catch up!"

"Many's the time in these fifteen years that you'd have died for your rashness if I hadn't stuck by you. You'd have died a damn fool—a rash, gold-crazy, bloodthirsty damn fool—"

"Stop talking. You're light-headed."

"All right, I'll stop talking. But if you've brought Bozizo and me up here on a blind chase—"

"Get on! Get on! Up the path! He's waiting!"

Melton took a step ahead of Graygortch, stopped, called. *"Bozizo! . . . Bozizo!"* He turned to face Graygortch, and he held a pistol. "Listen to me, Graygortch—"

"Get on, blast you! What are you up to?"

"There's been foul play. Where is he? . . . You've killed him."

"Why you—Melton! Put it away. We trust each other. We always have."

"Something's happened. I can see it in those murderous eyes of yours."

"All right, Melton. Something *did* happen. He's down there in the rocks. He slipped—the same as anyone might slip—me—or you—anyone. See him? *Down there."*

With a sudden forward plunge Graygortch struck the hand that held the pistol. The weapon fell. Melton barely caught his balance, regained his footing. Graygortch reached as if to catch him, and pushed him over the edge. He fell.

He threshed wildly at the air through a forty-foot fall. He went through a break in a projecting crag. There he caught and hung suspended, kicking. His head was caught. His struggling body dangled free, but his head was fast.

Graygortch watched.

He was not dead. Not even unconscious. He was caught in such a way that he couldn't help himself with his arms.

Graygortch was seeing it all over again. Just as it had been imprinted indelibly in his mind. The rain. The sullen dark green cast of the whole world, clouds and mountain, and jungle area below. He crouched in the path and looked down for several minutes.

At last the voice of the prompter at his elbow reminded him that the play must be finished. "Climb

down the rocks. He's waiting," said the low accented voice of the shadow of Chief Bozizo. "You have your knife in your pocket . . ."

Our play has run its course, and yet—watching through our simple shadowy eyes—we still know not whether he feels remorse. His conscience, if such it might be called, now rests, with hollow eyes, upon his office desk, mounted on a black marble base. Can any more be learned about how he is judged by living men? We listen:

"Gentlemen, this particular case which Miss Johnson lifted from our files has suddenly come into the spotlight, as you know, through a news story. We have now established that 'our' Lawrence Gray, whose active record here was closed twenty years ago, is the same Mr. Graygortch of the strange taxi news story, a very rich mine owner. Obviously he came back from Africa five years ago a changed man."

"Changed—how?" Around the conference table there was sure to be some skeptic who would ask such a question.

The superintendent himself volunteered a brief answer to the question:

"For one thing, he has become highly successful financially."

The skeptic again: "Does that mean he will not be prosecuted for any of the old crimes still hanging over him?"

"That is not our department, fortunately. But it's a fair guess that he won't be, even though we send a summary of our own record to the authorities. After all, he's a man of influence now. He can make himself felt in court and legislature. Though he was once a common criminal, he has long since graduated to the white collar level, where an offender's aberrations are almost inevitably exempt from the attentions of the criminal court, regardless of motives. As criminologists have pointed out, polite crime generally escapes criminal prosecution, no matter if, all told, it costs the public much more than the other kind."

"Then if Mr. Graygortch, alias Lawrence Gray, should be found alive—if he returns safely—we may assume that this record will be conveniently buried?"

"In all probability, yes. He is, by our accepted standards,

a success. Need any more be said?" The superintendent concluded the conference on this note. The supervisor barely glanced at Miss Johnson, whose slight smile told him that she too recalled her own earlier suggestion that the record be dropped into discard.

Listening, we know that we —simple souls—simple shadows—need not expect our answers from these men. Learned men—yes. But the murdered native of a far-off world is easily forgot.

We see it plainly now. This world belongs to Graygortch. Step by step (murder by murder, theft by theft) he's won it.

Then let us return him to the surface and hurl him back into his den of worldly wealth . . . This done, we linger for a day or two to catch the aftermath . . . Then coming back at last to our own shadow world, we find ourselves a little wiser, a little more content, from the final words we overhear.

"Any further news about Mr. Graygortch?" It was the plump, neatly dressed Miss Johnson, asking the question of the friendly, casual supervisor.

"Nothing, I'm afraid, that clarifies his mysterious return. As you know, he was found early yesterday morning on the floor of his office. The window was broken in. From all appearances he had been hurled in from the street. The police have been unable to determine how it could happen. A second-floor window. The theory of a helicopter had been discussed.

"He's in a state of shock. They'll get nothing coherent out of him, I'm afraid. The scrub woman who found him reported that he was talking aloud, addressing his remarks to a skull that he held in his arm. I've no doubt the psychoanalysts among us will find some Freudian basis for his strange attachment to the skull."

"Is he to remain under observation in the psychiatric ward, then?"

The supervisor nodded his assurance on this point. "From all appearances he'll be there for a long time to come. They say that in spite of twenty-four hours of treatment for shock, sedatives and all, they still haven't been able to pry that skull loose from his grip. I suggest we keep his record on file for further developments, Miss Johnson." **THE END**

SUPERLATIVES - - -

Here is another quiz from that fabulous book put out by the Guinness Stout people in England. Compiled to settle arguments in English pubs, perhaps a few of their teasers will start a few among our readers. We hope we've been able to sell some copies of "Superlatives" for its publishers because they're fine folks and the book is well worth the price.

		T	F
1.	Sing-Sing Prison, at Ossining New York is the nation's largest.	☐	☐
2.	The New York Times is the oldest newspaper in the U. S.	☐	☐
3.	The Amazon drains a larger area than any river in the world.	☐	☐
4.	All matter is composed of 92 natural chemical elements.	☐	☐
5.	There is a poison, six gallons of which would depopulate the earth.	☐	☐
6.	The world's largest gold nugget was found near Nome, Alaska.	☐	☐
7.	The Cow Palace in San Francisco is the world's largest exhibition hall.	☐	☐
8.	Primo Carnera was the world's tallest boxer.	☐	☐
9.	Huey Long, of Louisiana made the U. S. Senate's longest speech.	☐	☐
10.	The greatest height attained by a helicopter is 26,932 feet.	☐	☐
11.	Memphis Tennessee is as far south as the Northern Lights have ever been seen in the U. S.	☐	☐
12.	No one has ever thrown a hand grenade over 250 feet.	☐	☐
13.	The longest duration swim by a woman is 87 hours, 27 minutes.	☐	☐
14.	Pluto is the coldest planet in the Solar System.	☐	☐
15.	An electric eel can deliver a lethal charge of electricity.	☐	☐
16.	Reader's Digest is the world's largest printing concern.	☐	☐
17.	The record personal-injury payment was made by the New York Life Insurance Company.	☐	☐
18.	$360,000 was the highest price ever paid for a painting at public auction.	☐	☐
19.	Bizet's "Carmen" is the longest opera ever written.	☐	☐
20.	"Life With Father" had the longest Broadway run of any play in history.	☐	☐

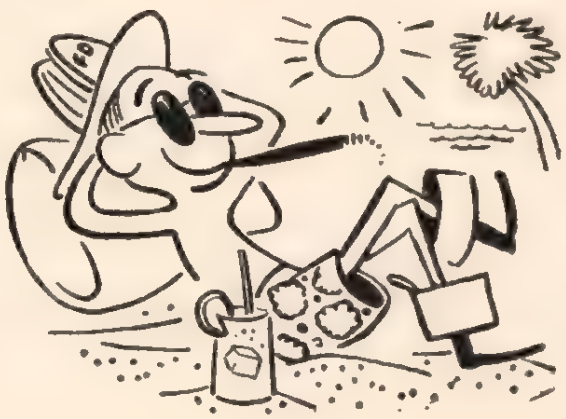
SUPERLATIVES - - -

ANSWERS

1. F The State Prison of Southern Mich., is the largest.
2. F The country's oldest newspaper is the Hartford, Conn., Daily Courant (1764)
3. T The Amazon drains 2,053,000 square miles.
4. T 79 solids, 11 gases, 2 liquids.
5. T The most poisonous substance known. The toxin of Clostridium botulirum.
6. F It was taken from Hill End, New South Wales, Australia, 1872.
7. F The New York Coliseum. Nine acres on 4 floors.
8. F Harry Gunson, a Canadian, stood 7 feet, 2 inches.
9. F Wayne Morse spoke for 22 hours, 26 minutes on April 24-25, 1953.
10. T Record of Jean Boulet, near Paris, France, June 6th, 1955.
11. F They have been seen from New Orleans, Louisiana.
12. F A standard U. S. Army grenade was thrown 284 feet, 6 1-2 inches by Lt. Alfred C. Blozis in 1944.
13. T Record of Mrs. Myrtle Huddleston of New York in 1931.
14. T —380 degrees F.
15. T Recorded as 1 ampere at 700 volts. Conceivably lethal.
16. F The U. S. Government Printing Office is the largest.
17. F Lloyds of London paid $400,000 for the loss of a foot.
18. T Price paid for Gainsborough's "Harvest Wagon."
19. F "Parsifal," by Wagner, holds the record. Four hours, 40 minutes.
20. T 3,224 performances.

FIREMAN'S HOLIDAY

In New Hamburg, N. Y., fire destroyed the home of the local fire commissioner while he was away on vacation.



(Continued from page 3)

the action of winds. . . ." Somewhere in there the whole cause and effect is wrapped up.

How do baseball players keep their socks up?

Everyone worries about this except baseball players who worry about their caps. So the socks stay up and caps eternally need pulling down. I think it has something to do with mental attitude and borrowing trouble.

What do two wrestlers say to each other in the dressing room after the match?

The conversation is usually limited to normal shop-talk like, "Jack, in the *second* scene of the *first* fall you let go the step-over before I could *yell.*" "I am sorry, Irving; I'd forgotten my lines and thought you were due to take over for the fall scene. You ad-libbed wonderfully!"

How many people have actually read "War and Peace" from cover to cover?

In what language? The copy that I tackled was the English version of Russian people thinking in French. Anyone who can take that is a nasty old One-Worlder and obviously up to no good. On the other hand, Russians probably eat it up, what with the recent potato faminine.

Why is it, when you walk onto a subway platform, the train you want is always just pulling out?

Many people wander into a subway station with no clear idea of where they are going. They see the Long Island car, think of Aunt Ida out in Great Neck, and when they break for the car, it is gone. After this happens a few times they develope the same persecution complex that you have.

Do the number of people in the United States who can swim outnumber those who can ride a bicycle?

This is a good question and shows to what lengths an idle mind will go to occupy itself. Figures show that there are 17% more swimmers than cyclists. However, 85% of bike riders can swim, whereas nearly 90% of all swimmers can and do ride bicycles. The confusion arises because of a club at Las Tolmes, California, where they ride bicycles under water.

When you save your dimes to blow your child to a special treat at a very snooty restaurant, why does the little brat always say, "I want a hot dog, Daddy?"

Perhaps if you took the kid more often, he'd have some idea what they serve in a nice restaurant. After all, a lad collects old bottles all week for pocket money and lives on hot dogs and 'burgers while away from home; then Saturday evening you wash his face and expect him to recognize paté de foie gras on a menu!

How many girls who swear to marry rich men are able to find one?

Most girls who swear to find rich men do find one. Unfortunately, in many cases, they find him married, unwilling, or going broke trying to convince them to have him. A certain percentage throw him back, money or not, and settle for lesser game.

What would happen to our economic structure if people suddenly refuse to stand in line in theaters, banks, or anywhere else?

Where *have* you been? People stopped standing in lines several years ago when there were enough autos to permit everyone to sit. Industry rallied immediately and provided drive-in movies, banks, and funeral parlors. Honestly, how some people can let the world go right by them!

Will anybody, after reading this, care one way or another what this editor wonders about?

Certainly. For example, I am willing to tackle any similar problems which bother you from time to time. The answers, of course, are often personal opinions and intended to be consoling or enlightening rather than purely accurate.

I trust that now we can both attend ourselves with the remainder of the magazines with freer minds.

Yours respectfully,

Robert H. Russell
WO USMC

MACS-2, MAG-13,
Navy 990, c/o FPO,
San Francisco, Calif.

THE UNEMPLOYED

By DORIS GREENBERG

"Machines put men out of work!" is an ancient cry. Workers fear automation. But perhaps the workers aren't the only ones.

THE screen slowly unfolded the last few pages of the latest romantic novel in large clear type, accompanied by "Music to Read By." When the end finally flashed on its white surface, Lillian Sloane put down her coffee cup and switched off the set.

It was very still in the large bright split-ranch house. Wondering at the lack of sound from Diane's room, she climbed the few stairs to her door, and opened it.

Eight-year-old Diane was sprawled on her bed reading a book. A real book! Surprised at the sight, Lillian exclaimed,

"Where did you get that?" Startled, the little girl jumped up, clutching the faded volume in her hand.

"I found it lying in the basement, Mummie. It's only an old book, and I'm sure it doesn't belong to anyone." Her mother took the book from the child's reluctant hands and examined the cover wonderingly. "It's a long time since I've seen a real book," she said, "not since I was a little girl about your age. "Fairy Tales," she continued, "maybe it's one of the books I owned before they destroyed all the printed books and started renting Vidi-Books from the library. But how could it pos-

sibly have got back here after so many years?"

"Please, will you let me finish reading it, huh? I read some wonderful stories about knights and dragons and elves and fairies, and we never get such stories from the Vidi-Book Library. Please, Mummie, will you let me? Please?"

Quite nervously, the mother studied the old volume in her hands, wondering what harm might come if she permitted the child to finish it. Finally, with some reluctance, she replaced it in Diane's eager hands. "Finish it, but don't let anyone else see it, not even Daddy. And when you're done, we'll have to destroy it. I'm afraid it's against the law now to read this kind of literature." With an elated smile the little girl clutched the book to her chest, and settling herself once more on the bed, opened the volume to page 88, *The Shoemaker's Elves,* and contentedly resumed reading the story she had been absorbed in.

Lillian walked over to the wall panel which controlled the Atomi-cleaner center in the foyer, and pressed the Quick-Cleanup button. Immediately the atomic-powered house cleaning equipment went into action, vacuuming the dust from the entire house while the dishes were washed automatically and the laundry was washed, dried and neatly ironed by the atomic-powered Launder-It machine.

Within minutes the entire housework was completed, while Lillian dressed and prepared to go out for a walk to the nearby Vidi-Book Library to exchange the completed novel for a new one. Returning to the kitchen for a glass of water, she was surprised to see Diane standing in the center of the room, tears coursing slowly down her face. She looked very sad.

"What's the matter, honey? Why are you crying?"

"Oh, Mummie, I feel so sorry for the poor little elves. They have nothing left to do any more, and they're so unhappy."

Puzzled, her mother inquired, "What are you talking about. What elves?"

"Can't you see those two little pink elves on top of the dishwasher? And the cute green ones in front of the Launder-It? And the little blue one near the Atomi-Vac machine? They look so sad, Mummie."

"Uh, oh," thought Lillian. "I should never have let her read that book. If she starts telling her imaginary tales to

anyone, we'll really be in trouble."

"Now, sweetheart," she comforted the weeping child, "you're only imagining you see those little elves. Elves don't really exist. Only in fairy tales, and you really shouldn't be reading them if they upset you so. Now come on out with me for a walk. I'm going to the Vidi-Book Library for another novel, and you'll forget all about those imaginary little creatures."

"All right, Mummie, but I wish you could throw out some of those Atomi-Powered machines so those poor elves could have some work to do."

Her mother laughed at the notion. "Honey, if I threw out my machines, *I'd* be the one to do all the work around here. So let's go, and please try to forget about those silly stories."

Reluctantly, the girl accompanied her mother down the sunny street, heading for the Vidi-Book Library a few blocks away. As they were passing the enormous Atomic Energy plant, surrounded by a long wire fence, one block from the Library, Lillian Sloane noticed her daughter staring wide-eyed at the huge building.

"Elves!" Diane said.

"Oh, come now," she laughed, "don't tell me you see some of your little friends!"

The child studied the building thoughtfully. Her expression mirrored concern. "No, Mummie, I don't see any elves over there.

"But I do see something, and I'm scared." She clutched her mother's hand tightly, and Lillian Sloane gazed with a puzzled expression at the frightened little girl. "I see a great big giant and he looks very angry. He's trying to push the building apart.

Lillian Sloane's amused laugh was lost in a great rumble that seemed to start from the center of the Atomic Energy plant, and rapidly became louder and louder. In another second the entire structure burst with a shattering blast, raining death and destruction over the surrounding territory for hundreds of miles. When the atomic blast had subsided, nothing remained of people or buildings but a monstrous pile of radioactive rubble. But suddenly, cheerful voices were heard, humming and singing. And there among the ruins, happily working and shoveling the terrible heap of pulverized dirt and rubble, were hundreds of colorful little elves.

Busy and useful again.

THE END

ACCORDING TO YOU...

BY THE READERS

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed reading the February issue of *Fantastic* with the one exception of "My Robot" by O. H. Leslie. I just couldn't make any sense at all out of it. "World of Women" by Harlan Ellison was very good reading. I would like to know just one answer and that is in "Beauty Contest" by Henry Slesar, just how did the girls walk from the test grounds all the way back to the Omaha Spaceport, a distance of four miles, in less than half an hour after a hard day at the test grounds such as running events, hurdles, etc.? In other words, the girls were very tired after all that and to be able to walk at a speed of over eight miles per hour just does not make sense to me at all.

Miss Harriet Esther Hanthorn
2414 Lakeview Ave.
Baltimore 17, Md.

• *We see your point, Miss Hanthorn, but you've got to remember, they were pretty special girls. Had to be. Only real super-gals could set up housekeeping in the galaxy.*

Dear Editor:

I am glad to see that you are finally going monthly. But because of this a question arises in my mind. Will you continue to have six issues to a volume, or will you follow in your companion magazine's footsteps and have twelve issues to a volume?

I have always hoped that you would revive your great classic, (hats off, please) "The Man From Yesterday." But my friend informed me that it would be almost impossible for you to put in a serial while you're on a bi-monthly schedule. So now that you're going to be on a monthly schedule please bring back my favorite story.

My ratings of your stories are as follows: "World of Women" was first. "Biddy and the Silver Man" was second. There is a three-way tie between "The Mystery of Deneb IV" and "Beauty Contest." "An Enemy of Peace" came in third. "A Kiss for the Conqueror" was a fair story but it could have been better. "My Robot" came in last.

Richard Mullen
2542 N. Drake Avenue
Chicago 47, Ill.

• *We'll no doubt run twelve issues to a volume. As to "The Man From Yesterday," I'm afraid reprinting the classic wouldn't be practical. But we may be able to talk Howard Browne into writing a sequel between his Hollywood picture-writing assignments. If you readers start yelling loud enough, he'll hear you clear out on the Coast. Howard always had a very sensitive ear for sounds made by his readers.*

Dear Editor:

Such illustrations! I am speaking of the ones that Finlay did for "Biddy and the Silver Man." The ending was fair. The ending for "The Mummy Takes a Wife" was terrible. That's all I can say about it and that's what made the story bad.

James W. Ayres
609 First St.
Attalla, Ala.

• *We're keeping Finlay chained to a beam in our basement. Can't let a valuable man like Virgil run around loose.*

Dear Ed:

Fantastic is going down. Since 1952 I rarely buy it any more, but on Thursday the cover got me. The stories weren't too bad but they could be a lot better. The thing that ruined your magazine was the drop from pulp size which meant

shorter stories, shorter readers' page and harder reading. Here's my vote to go back to pulp size.

Kirby McCauley
2374 Sepulveda Ave.
San Bernadino, Calif.

• *We remember those old pulp days with nostalgia. We had some great stories and illos in those days. But you know something? We honestly think the ones we're putting out today are better.*

Dear Editor:

The following expresses the joy which I am going to receive when *Fantastic* goes monthly:

"It's about time they did it!"
"Did what?"
"It . . . *Fantastic* . . . monthly . . . soon!"
"What?"
"Didn't you hear? *Fantastic* is going monthly!"
"When?"
"Don't know . . ."
"Will it be soon?"
"Probably."
"You sure you aren't kidding me?"
"Spaceman's honor!"
"When will it be out?"
"They didn't say. We'll just have to be on the look-out for it."

Philip Cote
3935 E. Martin Ave.
Cudahy, Wis.

• Fantastic *is monthly now. All the slack has been taken up and you'll find a new issue on the stands every thirty days.*

Dear Editor:

What an issue! The March one surpassed any previous issues. Every story was unique in itself.

The features were great, especially "It Sounds Fantastic, But." One will never know the mysterious ways the fates play. At times I think we are pieces on a chessboard and the fates have great games moving us mortals into tight situations.

I'm still trying to obtain *Dream World.* My news dealer hasn't received any as yet.

Anyway, keep it up!

W. C. Brandt
1725 Seminary Ave.
Oakland 21, Calif.

• *You probably have* Dream World *by now. What did you think of it? A lot of our blood, sweat and tears went into that book. And more will go into the next one, on sale March 12th.*

Dear Editor:

Please ask Leslie Gerber, who wrote in to your Feb., 1957, *Fantastic,* not to consider the fans lazy. I am one and my husband, brother, father-in-law and even my three small boys are fast becoming fans. It's just that I'm stealing time off from my many household chores to write even this letter or I would gladly write my arm off to all the other fans and magazines. We forgive Leslie this once. Anyway even housework and jet aircraft building are lonely jobs compared to comparing notes on s-f.

Hope some fellow fans will write to me if they can tear themselves away from this February issue long enough. It's the most.

Mrs. Julie Pass
2021 Ruth St.
Arlington, Texas

• *Your turn now, Leslie.*

Dear Editor:

I thought that February's issue of *Fantastic* was great. I especially enjoyed "World of Women" because of its fresh idea.

Why don't you stick to a gimmick like the Space I.Q. occurring in this month's *Amazing.* I think most of your readers would enjoy it.

How about some Murray Leinster stories?

Keep up the good work.

Peter Cohen
300 Central Park West
New York, N. Y.

• *Anything your heart desires, Peter. In this issue, you will find a real tricky quiz. And a Murray Leinster story will appear very soon. Service—that's our motto!*

Dear Ed:

Looks as if December was teen-age month in the *Fantastic* letter column what with me, Marty Fleischman and Linda Sutton. Notice you cut quite a bit out of my letter, though.

In case you haven't noticed it, you have tied Ray Palmer's record for editing s-f magazines. You edited *If* in 1952 before Quinn took it over, and now you're editing three magazines.

By the way, whatever happened to John Fletcher, Dean Evans, Mallory Storm, H. B. Hickey, William P. McGivern's Reggie, and Charles F. Myer's Toffee? Why not see if you can get some more stories by or about them for *Fantastic?*

Now here's my idea of the best and worst in *Fantastic* over the past year. Here I go with the novelettes first: "The Monarch of Mars" tied with "The Slow and the Dead." "Black Blockade." The best short stories: "Quick Cure," "Choke Chain" tied with "The Fifth Stone," (glad to see Al back.) "Growing Pains," "The Pint-Size Genie." The worst story of the year was "Revolt of the Synthetics."

As for art work, Valigursky has been doing his more average stuff for *Fantastic.* The best cover was the February one. My favorite interior illo was the Finlay on page 29 of the December issue.

John Butterworth
37 Richmond Rd.,
Belmont, Mass.

• *If we've topped Ray's record, we certainly couldn't have beaten a better man. However, I think you'll find Ray still holds the editing record by a total of several mags. Ziff-Davis had quite a long list back in the Forties.*

DREAM WORLD

The First Issue Sold Out!

Second Big Issue Now on Sale! 35¢

DON'T MISS IT!

It Sounds Fantastic, But . . .

The other night at a gathering of very intelligent people (your editor got in by accident) it was said that teen-agers have more to do with changing our language—introducing new words—than adults.

So we commissioned Paul Steiner, our short-items specialist, to check into modern juvenile slanguage and see what the language of tomorrow will be. The terms listed here have been completely authenticated and you'll be hearing them as time goes on. Eventually, they'll become accepted words and phrases in everyday use.

A COOL TIME.....*a great time*
A DREAM NIGHT.....*a wonderful evening*
A FUN ROOM.....*nightclub*
A HATE GUY.....*a mean man*
A HEAP.....*a car*
A HIGH DREAM.....*an impossible hope*
APPLE.....*oridnary character*
ASKING MAN.....*investigator*
A TALL BALL WITH FUN FOR ALL....*a good time for everyone*
BEAT OUT.....*to hurry out*
BUILDING A SIN.....*preparing for immoral act*
CHOP LOW.....*sarcastic personal comments*
CHOP OUT.....*leave in a hurry*
COOL.....*relaxed*
COOL CHICK.....*a relaxed girl*
CORNBALL STUFF.....*ordinary stuff*
CRAZY.....*wild*
CREAM.....*to beat-up*
DIG.....*to understand*
DINGY.....*crazy*
DOUBLE DITCHES.....*a strong drink*
EASY.....*calm, cool*
EASY MAN, EASY.....*take it slow*
EAT YOU UP.....*beat you up*
EIGHTY-EIGHT.....*piano*
FALL OFF A CLIFF.....*get hurt*
FAT.....*lot of money*
FEATHERS.....*dress*
FINE CUTTINGS.....*fine records*
FORTY THOUSAND MILES ON HER....*a shopworn girl*
FRANTIC.....*nervous or wild*
FUZZ.....*policeman*
GO FUNNY.....*act unfriendly or odd*

It Sounds Fantastic, But . . .

GONE ..... *off in the clouds*
HEAR THAT MAN GO ..... *jamming session*
HE'S A SMOOTH JOE ..... *a clever fellow*
HIGH ..... *exhilarated*
HIGH AND ALONE ..... *fantasy world*
HIGH AND FINE ..... *a high note*
HIGH DREAM TIMES ..... *in the middle of the night*
HIGH-FEVERED CHICK ..... *excitable girl*
HOPE KICK ..... *dreams*
HOUND MEN ..... *cops*
HURT MUSIC ..... *very sad*
I'M SO THIN IT'S A SIN ..... *broke*
KNOWING CAT ..... *person who understands*
KNOW SOMEONE FINE ..... *to know someone intimately*
LICORICE STICK ..... *clarinet*
LOW AND WALKING ..... *broke*
MADE A FINE SCORE ..... *made a good deal*
MIRACLE MAN ..... *one who provides a good time*
MUSHROOM PEOPLE ..... *people who come out at night*
ON THE LEFT HAND SIDE ..... *mad at the world*
OUT INTO SPACE ..... *lost*
PIGEONS ..... *suckers*
PLAYING ABOVE IT ..... *high C on high C*
RIGHT IN FLIGHT ..... *highest peak of excitement*
ROUND MONEY ..... *change*
SMOOTH ..... *clever*
SQUARE ..... *one who's uninitiated*
THE BIG BLACK BOX ..... *piano*
THE BIG HAND ..... *beat up*
THE BIG Q ..... *San Quentin*
THE BIND IS ON THEM ..... *threatened with violence*
THE BLUE MEN ..... *policeman*
THE CATS GET FAT ..... *to eat well*
THE CRAZY ROUTE ..... *wild party*
THE HAPPY HOUNDS ..... *happy friends*
THE HOCK CLUTCH ..... *go to the pawnbroker*
THE MAYOR OF TAP CITY ..... *broke*
THE RAT WITH THE STEEL TEETH ..... *a no good person*
THE ROUGH HUSTLE ..... *beat up*
THE STRONG HAND ..... *to beat up*
THIN ..... *broke*
THREAD ..... *clothes*
TIGHT BELLY BLUES ..... *hungry*
TO CUT OFF EVEN ..... *revenge*
TO DOUBLE ON THE SIDE ..... *hold two jobs at once*
TO GOOF OFF ..... *to go crazy, abandon a job*
TO GROUP WITH ..... *to mingle with*

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

continued from BACK COVER

THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS
THE TREASURY OF SCIENCE FICTION CLASSICS
Omnibus of SCIENCE FICTION
THE Astounding SCIENCE FICTION ANTHOLOGY
BEST FROM FANTASY and SCIENCE FICTION
EARTHMAN COME HOME

$1.00 IS ALL YOU PAY FOR ANY 3 OF THESE GREAT BOOKS

when you join the Club

Each One Packed from Cover to Cover With Science Thrills of the Future!

THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

by Edward J. Ruppelt

Here is the first authoritative report on hitherto hushed-up facts about "flying saucers" . . . by a former Air Force expert who was in charge of their investigation. NOT fiction, but amazing *fact!* (*Pub. ed. $4.95*)

THE TREASURY OF SCIENCE-FICTION CLASSICS

World-renowned stories that have stood the test of time—by H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Aldous Huxley, Phillip Wylie, Edgar Allan Poe, E. M. Forster, F. Scott Fitzgerald, etc. 704 pages. (*Pub. ed. $2.95*)

OMNIBUS OF SCIENCE-FICTION

43 top stories by outstanding authors . . . stories of Wonders of Earth and Man . . . of startling inventions . . . of visitors from Outer Space . . . of Far Traveling . . . Adventures in Dimension . . . Worlds of Tomorrow. 562 pages. (*Pub. ed. $3.50*)

THE ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION ANTHOLOGY

A story about the first A-Bomb . . . written before it was invented! A story of the movie machine that shows "newsreels" of any past event. Plus a score of other best tales from a dozen years of *Astounding Science-Fiction* magazine by its editor, John W. Campbell, Jr. (*Pub. ed. $3.95*)

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE-FICTION

Selected stories from *Fantasy and Science-Fiction Magazine*. The woman who became her own daughter . . . atomic power from beans . . . the man who lived 300 years . . . gambling on a strange planet . . . and many others. (*Pub. ed. $3.25*)

EARTHMAN COME HOME

by James Blish

Set free by antigravity machines, whole cities have abandoned Earth to wander through space, reverting to the savage law of force. And now, one man must save aging, half-crippled New York from the attack of several hundred gangster cities! (*Pub. ed. $3.50*)

NOW—THE BEST NEW SCIENCE-FICTION BOOKS FOR ONLY $1.00 EACH!

IMAGINE—ANY 3 of these full-size, brand-new science-fiction books—yours for just $1! Each is crammed with the science thrills of the future . . . written by the most sought-after science-fiction authors of today. A $9.70 to $12.40 value, complete and in handsome permanent bindings.

Each month the SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB brings you only the finest brand-new full-length books FOR ONLY $1 EACH (plus a few cents shipping charge)—even though they cost $2.50, $3.00 and up in publishers' editions! Each month's selection is described *in advance*. You take ONLY those books you really want—as few as four a year.

SEND NO MONEY
Mail Coupon TODAY!

We know you will enjoy membership in this new book club. To PROVE it, we are making this amazing offer! Your choice of ANY 3 of the new Science-Fiction books—at ONLY $1 FOR ALL THREE. Two are your gift books for joining; the other is your first selection. This liberal offer may have to be withdrawn at any time. So mail coupon RIGHT NOW to:

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB, Dept. FAN-4A, Garden City, N. Y.

WHICH 3 DO YOU WANT FOR ONLY $1.00?

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB,
Dept. FAN-4A, Garden City, N. Y.

Please rush me the 3 books checked below, as my gift volumes and first selection. Bill me only $1 for all three (plus few cents shipping charges), and enroll me as a member of the Science-Fiction Book Club. Every month send me the Club's free bulletin, "Things to Come," so that I may decide whether or not I wish to receive the coming selection described therein. For each book I accept, I will pay only $1 plus shipping. I do not have to take a book every month (only four during each year I am a member)—and I may resign at any time after accepting four selections.

SPECIAL NO-RISK GUARANTEE: If not delighted, I may return all books in 7 days, pay nothing, and this membership will be cancelled!

- ☐ Astounding Science-Fiction Anthology
- ☐ Best from Fantasy and Science-Fiction
- ☐ Earthman Come Home
- ☐ Omnibus of Science-Fiction
- ☐ Report on Unidentified Flying Objects
- ☐ Treasury of Science-Fiction Classics

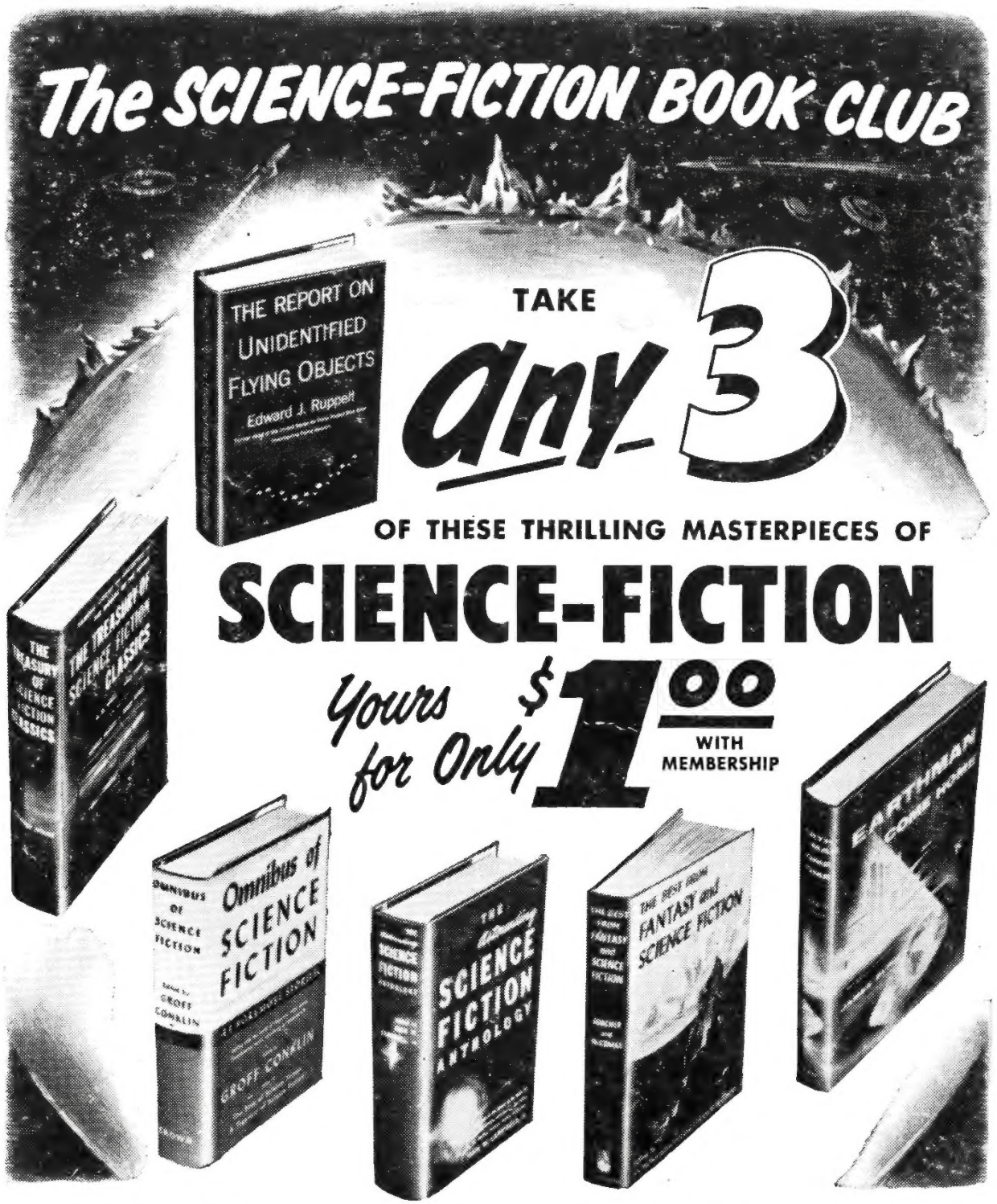
Name_____ (Please Print)

Address_____

City_____ Zone_____ State_____

In Canada: Selections $1.10 plus shipping. Address Science-Fiction Club, 105 Bond, Toronto 2. (*Offer good only in Continental U. S. and Canada.*)

The Most Generous Offer Ever Made By



A $9.70 to $12.40 value—you pay just $1 for any 3!

HERE'S an amazing offer to science-fiction fans! These volumes contain not only "top-drawer" science-fiction, but also science FACTS by outstanding authorities. Handsome, permanent bindings. Any 3 of them would cost you $9.70 to $12.40 in publishers' original editions—but all you pay is just $1.00 when you join the Club!

This generous offer is made to introduce you to the SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB, a wonderful new idea in bringing you the best of the new science-fiction books—*at a mere fraction of their usual cost!* Take advantage of this offer now—pick the 3 volumes of your choice and mail coupon on other side TODAY!

See other side for full details →